

# WIRE

THE WIRE ADVENTURES IN MODERN MUSIC

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Welcome to the

## New Weird America

Sunburned Hand Of The Man and the free folk explosion

Féla Kuti Robert Ashley Phew Mike Paradinas The Pastels Niobe Cedric Im Brooks Tu m'

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# Editor's Idea

When asked to explain the Deadhead phenomenon that was the wagon train following The Grateful Dead from town to town, the late Jerry Garcia used to speculate about his group being the last great American adventure. In a climate of creeping conservatism and conformity, he argued, the Dead on tour appeared to be offering kids the key to the highway. Through the portal of a Dead concert in a town near you, you got the rare chance to make like Neal Cassady and Jack Kerouac, and write your own *On the Road* with your feet. Or words to that effect. Certainly, since the early 1970s, the money to be made from rock pretty much determined its doom. With the music increasingly falling under the control of Rock USA Inc, it was just a matter of time before all the excitement would be rationalised out of it, along with the regional quirks and idiosyncrasies that threatened to interfere with the smooth operation of the Rock Machine.

The Rock Machine was delivering the coup de grace to the process begun by radio and the music industry's increasingly powerful promotional apparatus in the 1940s and 50s, as described by American megas Harry Smith in the background notes to his essential *Anthology Of American Folk Music* (Folkways). By anthropologising the music of America's backwaters,

Smith's collection was at least preserving its disappearing voices, even if it was too late to prevent them dying out. This was the theme of Richard Henderson's *Primer* on the archive recordings of hillbillies, folk blues, yodelers, fiddlers and other long dead denizens of the past that was dubbed the *Old, Weird America* (The Wire 219). In addition, the CD reissue of the Smith anthology seeded a mini-boom for archive collections drawn from the libraries of 78rpm collectors and the like, such as *Down in the Basement: Joe Bessard's Treasure Trove Of Vintage 78s* on Old Hat Records (reviewed in issue 233), a fantastic single CD collection including such gems as Goldie Jim's "Pleading Blues" and The Weems String Band's "Greenback Dollar". The weird thing is, once you know of the existence of the obsessive world of record collectors, they start showing up everywhere. I recently picked up a secondhand copy of a Jack Womack novel, *Gone, Gone, Gone*, which opens at a Velvet Underground gig at Max's Kansas City, New York. It turns out, however, that 78s collecting is central to Womack's so-called tale of time slipping out of joint, threatening the disastrous overlapping of two distant points on the time continuum. Old Weird America collectors who haven't read the book will be pleased to

know it wasn't The Weems String Band's fault.

More likely it's The String Cheese Incident or Phish or any number of American 'jam bands' who are to blame for trying to turn back the clock to when Garcia was still alive. Because they're laudably trying to keep the jamming tradition of The Grateful Dead, Allman Brothers and others alive, some commentators cite them as the heirs to the whole Old Weird America tradition. But, too firmly immersed in practices laid down by The Dead and co, they're more like museum curators than keepers of the flame. Not only has the flame been passed down elsewhere, it has begun a conflagration that is spreading rapidly among the outsider artists and groups explored in David Keenan's New Weird America article on page 32 of this issue. Though his piece centres on the Brattleboro festival, Vermont, and Sunburned Hand Of The Man play a large part in it, David is quick to emphasise that the phenomenon has already spread way beyond those artists featured here. Wire cover stars Jackie-O Motherfucker, for one, whose latest album is reviewed in Soundcheck. And contrary to the impression you might get from some pictures in the spread, you don't need a beard to apply.

CHRIS BORN

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# Letters

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Letters should include a full name and address



Wearing his ancestors' voices: Charlemagne Palestine

## What's my name?

I just read Brian Marley's review of my recent disc on Alan Margher, in *MoAr* (Soundcheck, *The Wire* 233). As Father's Day was in the air, a phrase in the article took me by surprise. In 1996 another Brian, Brian Duguid, did a telephone interview with me at a time when I was just contemplating whether to return to the planet from my long space travels. In our interview he asked me my real name and got it wrong, and since everyone gets it wrong for Father's Day I'd like to set the record straight.

I was born in Brooklyn, New York City, into a Jewish family with Hebrew first and middle names and a last name – Chaim Moshe Palestine – as was the norm in those days and often even now. I also took an American first and middle name – Charles Martin – so in my bureaucratic papers I am Charles Martin Palestine. As my mother early on started calling me Charlemagne, soon everyone else did too, and so I am also Charlemagne Palestine. Palestine is and has been my family name since my birth. I am the son of Chaim Filial Palestine, whose American name was Philip, and my brother was Chaim Hershel Palestine, whose American name became Howard Saul Palestine.

Brian Duguid thought when I said Charles Martin that I was taking first and last names. I am not a relation of Ricky Martin or Dean Martin. Now I'd just like to clear up this fuckup separately, so I'm sending a performance photo of me (above) singing next to the tombstone of my father Philip in the Beth David Jewish Cemetery in Elmont, Long Island, so that people can easily see the mistake.

**Aude Charlemagne (Charles Martin) Palestine aka Chaim Moshe Palestine** via email

## Non-adoration of the magi

I read *The Wire* 233 with great interest; the strongest and most consistently interesting issue in a long while.

I do have one question to pose for the loudmouths from Borbetomagus, however: have they ever considered the possibility that their status has never risen above in-muscle-cut level simply because they aren't very good? Can any reader seriously tell me they've ever 'enjoyed' a Borbetomagus record and spun it time and again for repeated listenings? God knows I tried about a decade back with roughly half a dozen of their recordings, and I gave up. The lack of any rhythmic propulsion in their work just leaves me with a headache, but maybe that's the point.

Lastly, a great pride by Alan Licht on Michael Gira; he seems to be one of the few survivors of the 80s US underground who's made it into the 21st century with any real dignity, taste and sense of purpose. I think it's about time he reproduced some of those old *NO* magazines for those of us who weren't around the first time.

**Dave Lang** Melbourne, Australia

## Under review 1

Re: Kevin Ennis's critique of Brian Morton's *Farmers Manual* review (*Letters*, *The Wire* 233). There are so many possible ways to review music: the requested no-nonsense approach; the allusive, cross-discipline contextualisation (of the contested *Farmers Manual* review); the polemical (cf Ben Watson, occasionally Ian Penman); the poetic (cf Toop's review of Autocure's *Confident*, sometimes Rob Young) and many others. I enjoy the different approaches published by *The Wire* and perhaps would wish to see more linkage attempted outside of music per se – musicians are as likely to be inspired by literature, the plastic arts or the other they ate in, as a particular musician.

Having said that, I don't think Morton's review was very well written and I was somewhat dismayed at his patronising attitude to the group, followed on as it did from the criticism levelled at Alex Twin the previous month.

If unsatisfied with a particular review, I'd suggest

searching the Web for others or asking on a mailing list. In the case of *Farmers Manual*, the review failed to mention the useful fact that all of the music is downloadable from their Website (though this was mentioned separately in the regular Go!to: section).

I much prefer the longer reviews, but have very little time for the short ones organised by genre which for the most part seem rather perfunctory. Ever thought of soliciting readers' opinions in a feedback questionnaire?

**Colin** London, UK

There already is a place for readers' opinions, and you just used it – Ed

## Under review 2

Well done to George Willis (*Letters*, *The Wire* 233) for providing the seed for a wonderful new idea, namely printing two opinions on every album reviewed. Don't imagine they'll like it George – doubles the workload – but blow me if it isn't an effective way of killing two birds with one stone. Firstly it helps to free up the idea of adding a bit of vitriol, as suggested by your good self. Secondly, Kevin Ennis's little problem of objectivity can be taken up by one reviewer, while the other is free to provide entertaining subjective expressivity. For, in my opinion, Kevin's important critique on *The Wire*'s thirst for posturing must be countered by the need for pointless debate and artistic eloquence. That chap called Dave who does *HipHop* reviews springs to mind [You must mean *Professor Tompkins* – Ed]... it may be hard to decipher his opinion sometimes, but it's rare that an individual review from him doesn't provide more entertainment than the asking photo for the entire publication. Further the idea of two-tone reviews is healthy because there are two sides to every creation, or so some such twaddle.

Forgive me this uneloquent, unnecessary, out of date foot note: in my opinion Peter Shapiro can sometimes

be sinful. Clive Bell reviewed his *Rough Guide To Drum 'n' Bass* some time ago (*Print Run*, *The Wire* 186) and picked up nicely on the fact that he seems to have some sort of hangup with the delights of Lulie Vibert, et al. Peter's review of the Warp anniversary CDs (issue 186) was a good case in point; as someone pointed out on the Letters page at the time: all rant, no review of the musical content. Did these electronic types do something nasty to Peter at an early age?

The magazine: the *Jukebox* still wins, but its the design of *Edim-Fors* that gets me most excited when unwrapping. All my love...

Richard Wilkes Leicester, UK

## To Victor the spoils

Knowing the tireless creative work of Victor Nubla during the past 25 years, as well as his inspirational but quiet role in the crystallisation of Barcelona as the city of transnational encounter that Rob Young convincingly praises in the Editor's idea (*The Wire* 232), Andy Hamilton's review of two of Nubla's latest works (*Soundcheck*, same issue) seems both offensive and unfair. Hamilton introduces Victor Nubla scathingly as 'something of a cult sound artist in his native Spain', and so reveals in the very first line his own cultural prejudices. This seems to be the original sin, making Nubla the target of one of the most uninformed reviews I have ever read in *The Wire*, ignoring the vast creative trajectory of this artist, and the real history behind the *Antichon* project. Hamilton adopts the same pedantic tone as his admired Roger Scruton (*Print Run*, same issue). I am sure that he would have been much more careful in writing about another, more conspicuous Anglo-Saxon luminary.

Néé Comago Prieto Bilbao, Spain

## Start making sense

I am obliged to Andy Hamilton for an amiable if short-winded notice of my new book *The Second Sense: Language, Music And Hearing* (*Print Run*, *The Wire* 232). For the record: 1) A cello acoustically coupled to the floorboards by its spike is a reality, 2) 'Acoustic' is a terminological fig leaf invented by Pierre Schaeffer to cover his nakedness, 3) Dr Scruton is a shirk. Your readers have a choice. They may even choose to scrutinise parts of the text exposed on my Website at [www.rmatonebraker.com/maconie\\_2\\_sense.html](http://www.rmatonebraker.com/maconie_2_sense.html)

Robin Maconie via email

## Softs furnishings

Your Primer on the works of Soft Machine (*The Wire* 232) was a welcome page, especially as it included some of their offshoots and contemporaries. But there were some Softs recording that should have been in there. BBC Radio 1 in *Concert* (Windows) shows the group in the throes of change, with contributions from

the 'classics' quartet of Elton Dean, Mike Ratledge, Hugh Hopper and Robert Wyatt and the extended line-up with Paul Nierman on trombone in place of Nick Evans. There's also an appearance from an uncertain Ronnie Scott on 'Teeth'. On this session, drummers Wyatt and Phil Howard get to play together – a rare meeting – and to show the direction Dean was moving in, the session opens with his quartet playing 'Blind Badger'. Ratledge guests on electric piano too. To bring things up to date, Dean, Hopper and John Marshall were reunited recently along with Allan Holdsworth on *Abecedaria*. The Soft Machine story continues...

Paul Donnelly via email

Thank you for highlighting the symbiotic relationship between Nucleus and Soft Machine. It was useful to see the credentials of these bands juxtaposed alongside Keith Tippett's various early outfits. I wonder if mention might also be made of the so-called 'godfather of Acid Jazz', Graham Collier, who was another mover and shaker in the fertile period of British jazz. Collier's various bands nurtured the early talents of, among others, John Marshall, Karl Jenkins and Geoff Copley (all acolytes of Soft Machine, Nucleus or both). Nucleus fans might also like to check out the Unofficial Ian Carr and Nucleus Website: [www.geocities.com/crucideus](http://www.geocities.com/crucideus), which was launched in November last year.

Roger Farbey Beckenham, UK

## Dead voices on air

I was confused by Lina Dauderova Russell's statements about the Swedish sound artist CM Von Hauswölff, and his involvement with the legacy of EVP (ghost voice) enthusiast Fredrich Jurgenson (*Cross Platform*, *The Wire* 232). Even magazines like the *Fortean Times* think EVP researchers are suspect; many EVP people concede that their world contains examples of clear out loud (like Spincorn). Obviously there's mileage to be had out of exploiting the suffering of the bereaved, but outside the sub-X files barbershop, EVP recording has been discredited just as the charlatans of Victorian spiritualism were discredited over 100 years ago.

Hauswölff likes to sound off about 'mediocrity', and I guess he should know because, no matter how meticulously he catalogued Jurgenson's work, Jurgenson's methods were a total joke. Hauswölff's show of passionate idealism is also spurious. A Channel 4 documentary aired two years ago showed how much tacit support EVP received from the Vatican, while Jurgenson himself was benighted by the ultra-orthodox, right wing Pope Pius XI (hey, don't mention the war) in the days when the Vatican was still too scared to let Catholics read the writings of Galileo!

We do need more bullshitters in the art world?

Alex Minah via email

## Water music

I must take exception to the usually reliable Edwyn Pouncey's review of Charles Hayward's new CD *Abecedaria Information* (*Avant Rock*, *The Wire* 232). When Hayward sings, I am not filled with 'inner dread' so much as the soul of a river in constant ebb and flow, a vision of a maritime world gone by, and a cry from the heart to the new world, gone mad. With sheets of percussive crystal and drums, he revises his grand portraits of Old Father Thames juxtaposed with millennium bomb culture.

I am sure that despite (as ever) such faint praise damning his new release, Charles Hayward will continue his lifetime commitment, stick to his formidable guns and create such great music as he has always done. And I for one hope there's not another eight years of water under the bridge before his next release.

Martin Coles London, UK

## Shedloads of music

Many thanks for the perceptive and positive review of Hugh Hopper's *Jazzloops* album, released on our label *Burning Shed* (*Soundcheck*, *The Wire* 232). I hope you don't think it too churlish, but we'd like to correct an error and mention an important omission.

As much as we'd like the kudos of being a German label, contrary to what Julian Cowley wrote, *Burning Shed* is based in Britain. Located in the avant garde paradise of Norwich, we're closer geographically to Bernard Matthews's turkey farms and Tisha's favourite gin than we are to the Kitty-Yo HQ or Hoiger Cuckoo's sock workshop.

As for *Jazzloops*, the review omitted to mention that it's exclusively available from [www.burningshed.com](http://www.burningshed.com). Along with albums by the likes of Rotkoi, Mick Harris and Roger Eno, *Jazzloops* is produced as a high quality burn-to-order CD-R and can be found on the 'catalogue' section of the site. We'd also recommend that those with Web access check out the brand new [www.hughhopper.com](http://www.hughhopper.com).

Glad to see your informative article on Cliff Martinez (*Bites*, same issue), whose excellent work has gone unrecognised for far too long.

*Burning Shed* via email

## Corrections

Issue 233: In *Soundcheck*, a subbing error in Tom Ridge's review of *The Sutanama's* *Another CD* stated that Neil M Hagerty produced the album. In fact, although Hagerty produced their debut, *Another* was produced by Matt Szwed and Jacob Feiberg-Pyne in New Jersey, and by Paul Oldham in Louisville, Kentucky.

Issue 232: In the *Yo La Tengo* feature, the caption for the picture on page 39 should have read: Georgina Huxley, James McHew, Ian Kaplan. □

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# Bitstream

News and more from under the radar.

Compiled by The Trawler

Night music: Robert Wyatt

**Kevin Shields** is about to release his first new music in more than a decade, having soundtracked *Lost In Translation*, Sofia Coppola's follow-up movie to *The Virgin Suicides*. The soundtrack, which is out in September on Emperor Norton, includes two songs and four instrumental pieces from Shields, as well as tracks by Art, Sousterpasher, Happy End and Jesus & Mary Chain >> A busy summer for **Poggy** but not only is he touring the US with original hooches Ron and Scott Kishelton, culminating in a Detroit "homecoming" gig on 14 August, but the first Stogies music in 30 years is to be unleashed on Mr Oslerberg's new album *Skull Ring* in September. The disc also includes contributions from Green Day, Sum 41 and Peaches >> **Robert Wyatt's** first studio album since 1997's *Shleep* is due in late September. Cockland contains 16 tracks and will be released by the Hannibal label >> Jazz/fusion flautist **Herbie Mann** died on 1 July at the age of 73 in Santa Fe, New Mexico. Probably most famous for the 1969 album *Memphis Underground*, Mann's search for a synthesis of the world's musics took him on tours in Africa, Brazil and Japan >> "The thing about Blood is that he's not playing the blues, he is the blues," says Black Rock Country guitarist Vernon Reid of **James Blood Ulmer**. In 1994, Reid invited the harmonica guitarist to Sun Studios in Memphis to record the *Memphis Blood* album. Now, more than a decade later, Blood is about to issue the follow up to that record, *No Escape From The Blues: The Electric Lady Sessions*, which was recorded in New York, thus completing a musical journey echoing the historic migration of the blues. The album features Blood's own compositions mixed with versions of blues standards by Elmore James, Howlin' Wolf, Muddy Waters, T Bone Walker and Jimmy Reid. The album is due out in September on

Hyena Records. Info: [www.hyenarecords.com](http://www.hyenarecords.com) >> The next release in the Thirty Ear label's Blue Series brings together former Company Row producer and current head of the Def Jax organisation, **BP**, with free jazzers Matthew Shipp, William Parker, Guillermo E Brown and Roy Campbell. An album is due out in the autumn; meanwhile, a 10" promo is doing the rounds containing one ten minute track titled "Sunrise Over Brooklyn" >> Australian garage rock veterans **Radio Birdman** are returning to play their first European shows in 25 years. The UK dates include Nottingham Rescue Rooms (31 August) and London Mean Fiddler (13 September) >> On 30 August, during the Micronations Festival on the uninhabited Finnish island of Hailuikka just off Helsinki, Venenese subversive art organisation **Sebotage Communications** will declare itself a state and change its name to SoS – State of Sebotage. The "ceremony" will be attended by representatives from Liechtenstein and the Kingdoms of Egeland/Vargeland and other "micronations", and will feature a performance by Philipps Quiltenberger and a sculpture by HR Gager. Info: [www.sebotage.at](http://www.sebotage.at) >> The latest in the NYC Soundwalk series, **The Bronx Soundwalk**, is just out. "An immersive audio guide for insiders", the CDs are designed to be played back using a portable CD player while the listener walks around the area in question (for a review of the Chatsworth edition, see Cross Platform, The Wire 230). Taking in the neighbourhoods of Yankee Stadium, Hunts Point and Bronx River, The Bronx Soundwalk's narrators include DJ Jazzy Jay and founder member of the Tetsu Cru graffiti collective, BG183. Info: [www.soundwalk.com](http://www.soundwalk.com) >> November's **London Jazz Festival** includes two Contemporary Music Network concerts (supported by The Wire) showcasing Tim Berne and his Science Fiction band with special guest David Torn, and The

Arte Quartet with Ninja Tune visuals team Hestatic, Orkest De Voharding and Icebreaker >> The Armit Museum in Cumbria is searching for lost, hidden, forgotten or as yet unidentified works by the Master of Merz, **Kurt Schwitters**, who lived in the Cumbrian Lake District after the Second World War. Any information should be passed on to the gallery: Armit Museum, Loughrigg Holme, Under Loughrigg, Ambleside, Cumbria LA22 >> Congratulations to **DJ Baddy Love** of Toledo, Ohio, who mixed his way into the record books with the longest continuous club DJ set in the world ever, which was completed on 22 June. Love spun continuously for a total of 80 hours and five minutes, with an enforced 15 minute break every eight hours. Proceeds from the event went to the American Cancer Society, and a CD of the entire marathon mix is planned for sale >> Illegal music downloaders could run the risk of having their computers destroyed online if a Republican senator and part-time hymn composer has his way. **Orin Hatch**, who chairs the senate judiciary committee on copyright abuses, quizzed technology firms on how to damage computers of file traders. He then extracted his comments after receiving legal advice stating that any such damage would break federal anti-hacking laws, as well as protests from Web users. "If we can find some way to do this [copyright enforcement] without destroying their machines, we'd be interested in hearing about that," he had said. "If that's the only way, then I'm all for destroying their machines." The senator himself earned \$18,000 (£10,700) last year in songwriting royalties from his own CDs, which include *America United*, *Heal Our Land* and *How His Glory Shines* >> The two **Fat Cat** nights listed in issue 233's *Out There*: incoming section have been postponed. The label hopes to reschedule the concerts for later in the year. □

## Death Row

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Scott Joplin *Elate Synchronisms* (Mechanical Bull)

Ornette Coleman *Slopes Of America* (Earth and Bull)

### One film

*Time Is Prohibited* by Ibn Ta'ala of Bukhara

### One book

*Labyrinths* by Jorge Luis Borges

### Three visitors

I was going to say my three exwives, but otherwise I guess I'd get a good tailor in to make me a nice suit,

the infamous Percy Denton to arrange the funeral guest list (and exclusions thereof), lastly a famous Protestant Minister with whom to discuss various last thoughts to which I can provide authority as I face my scheduled demise

### Last meal

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### Final message for the world

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### Music for the funeral

The Lonely Bull by Herb Alpert & The Tijuana Brass □  
The Howling Hex is out this month on Drag City







The wilderness years. By Mia Clarke

# THE PASTELS



On the road again: Katrina Mitchell and Stephen McRobbie

"When we write or play together, we have very personal ideas of what a piece of music is about," explains Pastels drummer and singer Katrina Mitchell when questioned on the creative process behind the group's latest project, the soundtrack to a Scottish road movie. "Even when we share them, they're still basically internalised. Writing the music for *The Last Great Wilderness* was really interesting: our aim was external and realised, so the whole focus of the process of interpretation shifted."

The Pastels formed in Glasgow in 1982, and subsequently released several armfuls of singles, EPs and albums for various labels including Creation, Chapter 22 and Glass. Their definitive line-up coalesced in 1990 around the trio of Mitchell, bass player Annabel Wright, and singer/guitarist Stephen McRobbie, and their dogged persistence has made them mainstays of Scotland's alternative scene. More recently they have found a home at Domino Records, who have provided a platform for their own increasingly prolific Geographic label; and at the end of last year, McRobbie was involved in setting up a record shop, Monorail, in central Glasgow.

The *Last Great Wilderness*, meanwhile, is a dark, humourous, Dogme-influenced Scottish road movie turned sour. It's the feature-length debut from director David MacKenzie, and premiered at the Edinburgh Film Festival in 2002. The film's sinister, sleazy charm and haunting atmospheres quickly lead to comparisons with off key 1970s horror movies such as *The Wicker Man* and *Straw Dogs*, while the theme of the paranoid rural nightmare is reminiscent of John Boorman's *Deliverance*. MacKenzie, who met McRobbie en route to a To Rococo Rot show in Edinburgh four years ago, had previously attempted to achieve what he defined as a "Pastels sound" on one

of his highly acclaimed series of shorts, *Marco's Dawy*, but it was some while later that the pair began to discuss a concrete proposal. "As we became friends," McRobbie relates, "we were aware that David was as serious as us about his work, and that he was really determined to make something original and beautiful. As we started to work on *The Last Great Wilderness*, we knew that it would be possible to make a connection between our styles that would be good for both of us."

The Pastels' music helps smooth the film's rough edges, reinforcing the elliptical narrative, and providing a suitably intense mood for MacKenzie's epic images of the Scottish landscape, which were grittily shot on a DV camera. The score, which was composed in varied segments over the course of filming, and used to edit the shape of the final cut, is largely broken down to 'character themes'. Through a subtle and effective choice of instrumentation, songs such as "Flora Agan" echo the characters played in the film. In this case the young, ghostly Flora is represented by Mitchell's ethereal vocal line and scattered, fragile punctuation from a xylophone. The idiosyncratic and fiercely volatile main character, Vincente, is sonically condensed to a menacing murmur in "Dark Vincente", provided by a vocal pitchbent through a Lovetone "Metalball" and a sparse guitar lead traced by a Wuritzer keyboard.

"It seemed to us that the main thing was simple; to enhance the images, but not overwhelm them," says McRobbie. "It was all about striking a balance between being expressive, but at the same time, secondary [to the action]. Most of the choices were a mixture of instinct, design and accident. We used a very similar instrumental set up on everything, but occasionally featuring different aspects as we felt the

narrative needed."

"That's probably the reason the released version of the soundtrack music is quite short," adds Mitchell. "When we were listening to it in isolation, trying to decide what should be included or left off, we found that some of the pieces didn't make so much sense without their images. Maybe in a way, the fact that the pictures and music seem so closely linked shows that we succeeded."

The *Last Great Wilderness* features collaborations with a variety of musicians. Bill Wells, the Falkirk-based jazz musician valued for his wild, inspiring celerity, arranged and played keyboard sections. Tortoise drummer John McEntire left Chicago to work an intense six day period as producer; while Pulp vocalist Jarvis Cocker sings the film's theme tune, "I Picked A Flower".

"The music with Jarvis is the furthest away stylistically from our own music," McRobbie points out. "David wanted a triumphant sounding dirty pop song that was in the film, riding high in the charts. We've known Pulp for ten years, and the idea of a 'lothario pop star' just led to Jarvis; even though it's far away from both the way he is and Pulp's most recent album. But I think he just made it work by getting into character."

"When the time came to actually cut the music to the pictures, it was the middle of the night," reveals Mitchell. "But the way those scenes seemed to blossom before our eyes as the music took its place was totally fascinating and incredible. It felt really natural."

"The music we made for *The Last Great Wilderness* is an almost exact reflection of the type of music we would choose to make at this moment," McRobbie adds. "It led us to where we wanted to go." □ *The Last Great Wilderness* is out now on Geographic. Monorail: [www.monorailmusic.com](http://www.monorailmusic.com)

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# NIOBE



Phantom engineer. By Chris Sharp

Wires hang from the ceiling. The room feels unfinished, somehow in transit. A wide, angular velvet cushion in one corner is draped with fairy lights and fashionable young things intent on their mobile phones. Against the rear wall, an art projection flickers through a succession of smeared, inchoate and vaguely biological forms. Through the open window at the other end of the gallery, East London's Hoxton Square is a dusty sorus of greenery, and on this midsummer evening the buzz of conversation is drifting languidly upwards.

The Deluxe gallery is a singularly appropriate setting for the elegantly fragmentary and delicately abstract music of Yvonne Cornelius, aka NioBE. Cornelius herself is standing alongside the open window behind a tangle of cables. Beside her, a handful of black boots complexes with the wayward drone that the installation piece at the back persists in emitting. Although she tells me later that this noise "was a real catastrophe for our health and our nerves", Cornelius seems to be enjoying herself — she's poised, bemused, laughing as she sways away from the microphone between pieces. From time to time she flashes out the sound, plucking at a gut-stringed acoustic guitar.

The serendipitous mood and the sense of chaos only narrowly held at bay is not entirely unexpected — NioBE's recordings (*Radioesatz*, from 2003, was released by Tomlab; *Tae Tae* came out on Song earlier this summer) provoke similarly tantalising sensations. It's intensely quantic music, an impulsive succession of moods and sounds which merge and separate in a swift of dreamlike logic. It's all bound together by Cornelius's richly evocative voice — she whispers, murmurs, croons and sighs through an array of technological processes, and in the process somehow manages to infuse her strangely elusive compositions with the dusty drama of Weimar balladry or the distant romance of inter-war Hollywood.

Born to a German mother and a Venezuelan father, Yvonne Cornelius grew up in Frankfurt, and fell in love with opera and classical music at the age of nine. "I

listened to the music of my gods night and day," she says, listing Pergolesi, Bach, Stravinsky and Shostakovich as particular favourites. "But," she continues, "being confined in my parents' house made me crazy, and I wanted to escape. I finally managed it when I was 17. By this time, I was living in the jazz improvisation scene, and from there I landed in the electronic scene."

In 1994, Cornelius packed up her synthesizer and her tape echo and headed for Cologne, where she set up the studio that she still uses. "It feels like a wonderful greenhouse with many plants and perfect light, and it constantly inspires me." But she hasn't entirely escaped the influence of her family — Latin touches illuminate her music sporadically, and when I ask about her South American heritage, her reply is illuminating.

"Well, it's really strange, but I feel an enormous and deep connection with this continent. My mother is a blonde, blue-eyed soul, who would never believe in voodoo or the effects of the moon, and she taught me a serious, logical way of thinking. Nevertheless, I can't stop myself from being drawn to spiritual things like synchronicity, or telepathy. Thanks to my mother, I am not exteriorly-minded, and I don't actually practise these things, but her strong education didn't quite work..."

All of which goes some way to explaining Cornelius's organic, almost alchemical approach to electronic composition. She uses an ageing Ensong keyboard/sampler and an eight-track tape machine to record voice, acoustic guitar and string parts — it's a setup which is simple and openended enough to allow stray sounds and chance occurrences into the mix. "I want to tell stories and create an atmosphere with tunes," she says, "and sometimes the noise of a faulty cable has more to say than a word in my tales. I have a four-track tape-machine that gives me many broken and disturbing noises — I love it! There is no strategy at all, just an attempt to include everything which I love in music." It comes as no surprise that Cornelius mentions the movie *Brazil* as a non-musical influence:

Terry Gilliam's ramshackle, seeming dystopia, shot through with romantic dreams and baffling interludes luxuriously blending past and future, is as good an analogy as you'll find for NioBE's music.

*Tae Tae* opens with a spoken word "Prolog" which, translated from the German, is revealed as a synaesthetic blur of imagery and an oblique gloss on the music which follows. "We do not want to leave you in any doubt about what is being played," it begins, and then confounds that bid for clarity by continuing: "Out of limbo meets the allegorical voodooman, screwed onto two ex-girls and two one-girls. On the way to the metal mountains, fog of the virgin of Guadeloupe." It's hard to shake the suspicion that *Tae Tae* should be experienced as a fantastical drama which owes more to the surreal radio plays of Klaus Schoeningh than it does to the music of most of NioBE's contemporaries in Cologne.

This exquisite sense of dislocation is compounded by the ratty wit with which the words on the sleeve seem to coincide with what's being sung. Cornelius writes her lyrics in collaboration with the poet Janeta Schude, but when she comes to record them, the text is subjected to a kind of improvised alchemy: "Janeta and I have a mutually perceptive and understanding way of working together. I love her lyrics — they are breathtakingly beautiful — but sometimes the consonants or vowels are more important for me as sounds. I need my particular way of using words, an absolute freedom to create a kind of alien language, that imitates a real language." This yearning for linguistic mirvans is a recurring theme. "I am fascinated," Cornelius says, "by the image of the lonesome radio nightshow. The city is sleeping, and only a few people are awake. They hear the lonely presenter and feel lonely too. Everything is quiet and dreamy. In my song "Nachtsendung", I tried to describe this feeling. The story is about a meeting of aliens and humans. The aliens put a spell on the presenter, and he sings as they wish, and in their language." □ *Tae Tae* is out now on Song.



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# CEDRIC IM BROOKS

Mystic revealer. By Clive Bell

At ten o'clock on a June Saturday night, the legendary Skatalites take the stage at Glastonbury, their line-up featuring the saxophone of Cedric Im Brooks, one of Jamaica's premier instrumentalists and a musician whose history stretches back to Sir Coxsone Dodd's Studio One hits, the origins of reggae and beyond. A few days later, Brooks is on the phone from a hotel in Vienna. "Since [founder member] Roland Alphonso died five years ago I've been touring with The Skatalites," he relates. "This was my first time at Glastonbury, and it was really very impressive. The people didn't want us to leave, they were upset."

In the 1960s Brooks was a key Studio One player for producer Coxsone Dodd, a member of The Vagabonds, and constantly in demand for pop and jazz outfits across the Caribbean. But his interest in Jamaican native rhythms led him to Count Ossie, the Rastafarian hand drummer who lived in a settlement outside Kingston. "I used to go up to the hills to play with Count Ossie," remembers Brooks. "On a Sunday we would go up and do some jazz with the drums and everything. When I played in the clubs I would invite the drummers to come also, and that was a big hit." The resultant group, christened Count Ossie And His Mystic Revelation Of Rastafari, recorded the triple LP set *Grounation*, still regarded as the ultimate in pure Rasta instrumental music.

In 1968 Brooks took a trip to Philadelphia, meeting vocalist Leon Thomas, saxophonist Sonny Rollins – "My first major influence," he says – and, crucially, Sun Ra. Deeply impressed by Ra's community-based approach, with musicians living and rehearsing together, Brooks was on the point of joining The Arkestra when the birth of his daughter called him back to Jamaica. There he set about forming his own group, The Light Of Saba (Saba meaning Ethiopia). During the 70s they recorded four albums; from these, plus a handful of exorcisingly rare 7" and 12" releases, the London-based Bronze Axis label has just compiled a 39 track CD.

Retaining the brass and Rasta drums that characterised The Mystic Revelation, Brooks adds

reggae guitars to the mix. The sound is warm and the playing meditative – in particular Brooks's own exquisite alto sax and wooden flute, and Calvin Cameron's trombone – yet what is most striking is the group's open, almost magpie attitude to rhythms. Mentos, rocksteady, reggae, calypso and disco styles alternate in an overview of Jamaican musical history, while rhythms from Africa, Cuba and the land of funk sit alongside rhybngn Rasta drumming. In short, Brooks and The Light Of Saba had forged their own take on 'World Music' ahead of time. How did this come about, and what was Sun Ra's contribution?

"After leaving Count Ossie," he replies, "we were dealing with young musicians from the Ethiopian Orthodox community [the African-inspired Christian church that promotes Rastafarianism in Jamaica]. They were very enthusiastic, but most were amateurs who had never appeared in public. So we did some training and put the group together – it allowed me to do more research into traditional African rhythms from Jamaica. The Mystic Revelation was primarily a Rastafarian group, whereas with The Light Of Saba I was able to look more into rhythms like burru, pogo and kumina." Since African religious drumming had been banned during plantation slavery, these West African drumming styles survived underground in marginal Jamaican communities.

On the subject of Sun Ra, Brooks expands: "I went to Philadelphia primarily to go to music college. At the same time I met one of the guys involved with Sun Ra. I went along to see him, and was very impressed by what he was doing. He had a house where people lived, rehearsed and did their programme. This was very expressive music, and through that he was able to express his Afrocentric philosophy. On my return, the first group I started was The Mystics – we played concert performances instead of going to the dancehalls."

While rocksteady swept across Jamaica, Brooks was dressing his unit in African robes and experimenting with free jazz, poetry and dance. "Sun Ra gave me a context to go back further into my own African roots. It

was a different kind of freedom," Brooks explains. "Not Sun Ra's freedom with sounds and abstract rhythms, but a freedom to enjoy different rhythmic patterns in the context of what I was doing." While highly attracted to Sun Ra's ecstatic free blowing, Brooks admits that his players were not yet quite on that level. "It would have been difficult to make that expression," he says. "Most of them had started from scratch." What Brooks found in Sun Ra, and likewise Fela Kuti, was permission to mix a cocktail of musical genres and explore an adventurous, Afrocentric philosophy. "Fela Kuti was a great example for moving Africa out of the colonial experience into its own kind of reality," he asserts. "Fela used his own native music to become the force of his creativity. This Nigerian situation was the same as in Jamaica, where we had imported music, until we developed ours and other types of our own music."

The tension underlying Brooks's music is between the commercially adopt saxophonist, a core member of Coxsone Dodd's hitmaking crew, and the exploratory musical researcher, reaching deep into Jamaica's past. It's a tug of war between past and present, between church and dancehall. And it's there in Brooks's origins in 1940s Kingston: he was born in a house owned by a Salvation Army band major. Living in that same house was Oswald 'Big Boy' Brooks, original trumpeter for The Skatalites and commercial musician par excellence.

Cedric Im Brooks's eloquent saxophone was always going to be in demand from commercial groups, and those days he enjoys his work with The Skatalites. But in the 70s the pull of commercial music lost its grip as he focused on The Light Of Saba. "This is why I left Coxsone Dodd," he concludes. "I was trying to break the two things. I had an Afrocentric projection, which wasn't going too well with what Coxsone was doing. His type of music was becoming popular, so it was difficult for him to put that aside and concentrate on a more Afrocentric programme. I guess it forced me to choose." □ Cedric Im Brooks & The Light Of Saba is out this month on Honest Jons

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A survey of sounds from around the planet.  
This month: Andy Hamilton takes time out from visiting Corsica's biggest jazz festival  
to investigate the island's extraordinary polyphonic choral tradition

# GLOBAL EAR: BASTIA



Grant Green Jr at the Jazz Equinoxe festival; polyphonic trio Soleodona; Corsican trumpeter Pascual Pissu

Bastia, the commercial centre of northern Corsica or Haute-Corse, is not a beautiful town, but it's full of character. Although Napoleon was born in Corsica, he's not a hero to Corsicans, as he virtually destroyed his birthplace, describing it as "nothing but an excrement". The main street, Boulevard Paoli, is instead named after Pascal Paoli, 18th century nationalist hero and proto-democrat. In the Second World War, Bastia was the only town in Corsica to be severely liberated – by the Americans on the day after the island's bombardment in 1943. More people died in this 'friendly fire' incident than the total throughout the Nazi occupation.

I was in Bastia for the fourth Jazz Equinoxe festival, and my arrival coincided with French strikes against pension reforms. This necessitated some changes of venue, as the Theatre Municipal was out of action, but undaunted, the organisers programmed events for the smaller Theatre Saint-Angelo. The festival didn't aim to showcase local talent, but veteran boss guitarist Lucien Ferret sat in with the Daniel Huck/Louis Martinez group from mainland France and outshone them, without revealing any obvious Corsican inflection to his playing – he is one of those legions of players who choose to stay at home rather than aspiring to recognition in the musical metropolises. From neighbouring Sardinia, however, came a genuine star, trumpeter and flugelhorn player Paolo Fresu, with regular partner Fano Di Castro on bass plus Antonello Salis on piano and accordion. Fresu is a Miles Davis disciple, specialising in a plaintive melancholia, and immediately recognisable because he plays sitting down. The hyperkinetic Salis, in complete contrast, is from the school of commedia dell'arte, and his relentless surreal humour peddled over the long haul. Fresu explained afterwards how Italian Sardinia and French Corsica, though separated only by a few miles of Mediterranean sea, had little contact though little enmity either – he had visited Corsica only twice in his life.

But the highlight of the festival was guitarist Grant Green Jr, son of the Blue Note star of the 60s. He was rather alarmingly described in the local newspaper *Corsa Minin* the following day as "ce beau bébé de Detroit" (Green is a large man of 48). With Damon

Duwhite on drums and Brian Cheretto on what I was assured is Corsica's only working Hammond B3 – a real antique in an incongruous wooden cabinet – Green focused on the soul jazz, Sly Stone and James Brown covers, delighting an enthusiastic audience. The music, though not particularly original, was beautifully played and remains of universal appeal. Sadly, we heard little from pianist Michel Sarabaty, patron of the festival and one of the most interesting French improvisers, aside from some plegant solo piano after one of the gigs.

While at the festival I took the opportunity to research the vibrant genre of Corsican polyphonic singing. This is the traditional music that underwent a renaissance in the 1970s coinciding with a revival of nationalism – of which there's still plenty of visible evidence. Poster signs in Corsican such as "Bastai L'inghjustizia culturale" and "Basta a tipressione" have a clear enough meaning even to an English-speaking tourist. The Moor's Head symbol of Corsica – the island apparently looks a little like a head with a bandana – is ubiquitous, an enigmatic national and nationalist icon. Occasional outrages against government offices amount to 'soft terrorism', and the fist-pumping groups of separatists have almost always aimed to damage property, not to take life.

The most influential groups formed to perform polyphonic music during the 70s was Cantu U Populu Corsu (The Corsican People Sing); others include U Muxini, A Fietta and Soleodona. The pure sound is a capella, and singers usually appear with one hand cupped behind the ear to focus the sound. But their music occupies a potentially profitable niche of the World Music industry – Les Nouvelles Polyphonies Corses, led by Jean-Paul Poletti of Cantu U Populu Corsu, had international success with *Paradise*, an Ambient take on folk tradition produced by John Cale and Patti Smith, while Unversal have taken on the group Soleodona. In other cases the appeal hasn't yet reached beyond some very successful tours of mainland France. I caught up with Soleodona, and spoke to Petersa Gattasoca, one of their three singers, who explained how the Corsican polyphonic groups are in the forefront of nationalism – she herself is committed to separation.

On their Philips compilation *Le Meilleurs Des Nouvelles Polyphonies Corses*, Soleodona offer a more heavily-produced and sophisticated fusion, with more dynamic variation. There's no reason this sound couldn't have the success of Spanish monks and holy minimalism. In contrast the pure, elemental sound of Alte Voce is very rough and raw, the eight-part polyphony rich, vibrant and resonant. They're heard very effectively on Polyphonies, on the Corsican label Ricordi. The delivery of times is so stentorian that it's close to Tibetan throat-singing, and indeed the group A Fietta have collaborated with singers of that genre. The secular material of these groups contrasts with Mimona Tramadaia, whose beautiful disc *Canti Sacri* (and *Gravona*) is on the Ajaccio-based Domaine De Pietri label. All lyrics are in Corsican, of course, which sounds halfway between French and Italian, but closer to the latter – predominantly an oral language until two centuries ago, it is widely spoken, especially in the interior. The heart of nationalism is the inland university town of Corte, which I visited one hot afternoon. It has a spectacular setting surrounded by mountains, but the reaction to tourists isn't always friendly. "Vus n'aimazpas les anglais?" I asked one bad-tempered local. "Pas depuis Napoleon!" ("Not since Napoleon!") he replied – admittedly that was after my hire-car had collided with the car-door he'd suddenly opened.

It's almost impossible to get information in English on Corsican polyphony, but there are two books in French, each with a valuable compilation including older recordings – the delightful *Polyphonies Corses* by Philippe-Jean Catinchi (Cité De La Musique/Actes Sud) and *Corse: Polyphonies Et Chants* by Frank Tenaille (Editions Du Layeur). The best selection of discs in Bastia is available from Chorus Records in Rue Cosse Camprich, with its knowledgeable proprietor Jean-Michel Rodet. "Very Mediterranean," he commented as I expressed surprise at the almost North African-sounding Alte Voce. But then that's the pull of Corsica – politically part of metropolitan France, but with a very un-metropolitan Mediterranean culture. Ricordi: [www.ricordi.com](http://www.ricordi.com), Domaine De Pietri are at 02 33 0682 38 78 96. Email Jazz Equinoxe at [jazzequinox@yahoo.fr](mailto:jazzequinox@yahoo.fr)



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# Earl Howard



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# INVISIBLE JUKEBOX:

Every month we play a musician a series of records which they are asked to identify and comment on – with no prior knowledge of what they're about to hear.

Interview by Mike Barnes. Photos by Jern Tomter



MIKE  
PARADINAS

Born in 1971, Mike Paradinas began using synthesizers and a four track tape recorder as a schoolboy in the late 80s, and by 1992 he had acquired his first computer with a sequencing program. His early music, based around raucous distorted breakbeats and chattering synth lines, sparked interest from the Evolution label, run by Mark Pritchard and Tom Middleton of Reload/Global Communication, but his first two albums as *µ-Ziq*, *Tango N' Vectif* (1993) and *Bluff Limbo* (1994), were released on Rephlex, the label co-founded by Richard James aka Aphex Twin, who had been a fellow student at Kingston University. *µ-Ziq* gained further notoriety with Paradinas's demolition remix *µ-Ziq Vs The Auteurs* in 1994; he has since remixed artists as diverse as Björk, Yo La Tengo, Mogwai, Chris & Cosey and Neneh Cherry.

In 1995 Paradinas decamped to Worcester, launched his own label Planet Mu in association with Virgin Records sub-label Hut Recordings, and released *In Pine Effect* and the mini-LP *Salsa With Mesquite* in that year, followed by a host of music, on labels such as Clear and Reflective, under different aliases: Tusken Raiders, Kid Spatula, Diesel M, Jake Siazenger and Gary Moscheles. In 1996 his playful collaboration with Richard James as Mike And Rich, *Expert Knob Twiddlers*, was released after two years, and he paired up with Holland's Speedy J to record as the more industrial tinged *Slag Boom Van Loon*.

The Funk and soul jazz influences which had become more overt in Paradinas's work were mixed with drum 'n' bass on his most commercially successful *µ-Ziq* release to date, *Lunatic Harness* (1997). *µ-Ziq*'s higher profile also earned Paradinas a support slot on Björk's world tour in 1998. Since *Royal Astronomy* (1999), *µ-Ziq* material has become more melodic, featuring strings and with Paradinas providing backing vocals for vocalist Kazumi.

Planet Mu is now a completely independent venture featuring a roster of 48 artists, including the likes of Leafcutter John, Venetian Snares, Capitol K and Joseph Nothing. He has just released a new *µ-Ziq* album, *Bilious Paths*. The Jukebox took place in London.

## VLADIMIR USSACHEVSKY "COMPUTER PEECE NUMBER ONE"

FROM INDICES OF ELECTRONIC MUSIC  
(201 AMERICAN MASTER) 1999

It's an early electronic thing isn't it? It doesn't sound like Stockhausen. It's more like space music, like a 50s, 60s exotica thing. It's the electroacoustic? Tape music? Sounds like Luc Ferrari or Xenakis...

**You're on the right track: it's Vladimir Ussachevsky.** Now you can tell it's a synthesizer rather than a transformed sound. It reminds me of some of Luc Ferrari's stuff. I saw him in Paris a few months ago playing [this sort of] stuff. I don't know whether it was live or off a CD.

**Was this 'pioneer' electronic music ever an influence on you?** Well, no, because I only discovered it after quite a while. As a kid growing up in Raynes Park there wasn't very much Vladimir Ussachevsky in my Price. I suppose what influences you at an early age is just what has seeped in and, being interested in electronic music, I probably have one of his tracks on compilations of early electronic stuff, but I have never heard this track.

**It's a computer piece from 1968 using source material made on digital machines at the Bell Telephone Laboratories in New Jersey.**

Milton Babbitt, didn't he do something there? God knows, Yeah, it gets a bit academic at times doesn't it? Now everyone uses the same equipment, give or take, and the software does the same things. In those days it probably took a week or two to get the sound out. But if you listen to the finished product, it's quite cute isn't it? In those days they were exploring that fruity, plucky sound. There was a lot more emphasis put on the process, because it was such a new thing.

## YO LA TENGO "FALSE ALARM"

FROM *ELECTRO PURA* (MAGNOLIA) 1995

[During intro] Some sort of Farfisa organ, which should give me a clue. To me it sounds like an Argentinian early pre- or post-punk band, but slightly Krautrock-influenced.

**That's pretty much on the mark.**

But I don't know who it is, I've never heard this. I thought it was Krautrock at the start with the drone background, but when the singing came in I thought, 'What the fuck is it?' It's a pretty cool track, quite hypnotic. Sounds a little bit Velvet.

**You've remixed some of their music.**

It's not The Auteurs is it? No, no it isn't [laughs]. Should know then, shouldn't it? It's not Yo La Tengo is it?

**Yes, from 1995.**

Shit! I know you often play people music by other people they have worked with, and I was going back through my removers, but I didn't sound anything like Yo La Tengo, I like it. I didn't realise they were this good [laughs]. The one I remixed was a four chord thing, "Autumn Sweater". That's the only thing I've heard by them. I like that! I thought it was much older than that.

**Do you approach a rock remix differently from an electronic track?**

No, I approach it in the same way: as source material. Sometimes with electronic stuff you can get into it more because you can recreate some of the sounds, but with rock bands especially, you've got to treat it as source samples. I did tend to treat it as blocks of sound. Especially with that Auteurs one. But we're probably coming to that...

**We are indeed. I was always interested in that 1995 *µ-Ziq* vs The Auteurs record as a clash of two completely different worlds. How did you get involved?**

Yeah, that was weird, wasn't it? We were both on Hut,

and Dave Boyd from Hut was a fan of my first two records... God knows why. He asked me to remix "Lenny Valentino", and they did a few removers and put it out. It was as simple as that, really.

**Was it something you enjoyed doing or did you just view it as a job?** No, I always enjoy doing music. I didn't see it as a job. I found it quite exciting to use this source material without getting sued. I'd just got a sampler so I was just passing about - which is the best way really. Exploring those sounds. When I met them at the cut they seemed really nice guys and really into it.

**Auteurs vocalist Luke Holmes recently described that record as "Remixes by some kid from Wimbledon for £500. A lot of money for a teenager. Never listened to it myself."**

He did listen to it, because he came up with a tracklisting for it. He was at the cut, and we both listened through it a few times. It was a little bit more than £500 - it would have been £500 these days. It was the first bit of money I earned from music, apart from £50 I got for a gig once. I got paid for the *µ-Ziq* albums eventually but that was the first money I got. I always wonder about the economics of putting out albums in the fields of dance music and electronics, as these are so many released. Does anyone make any money?

Not now can't. Nothing sells, that's true. It's the same with rock music - there's shitloads. It's the same as all sorts of music. It can go really well, like it did with Jungle, where you had everyone making woked stuff because there was a scene, but with electronic stuff it's so spread out and people are inspired by the most boring things, I think, judging by the demos I get. It does have a lot of energy, but a lot is completely one-dimensional, emotionless, empty.

I think it's just that some people are talented and some are not. Some people, no matter how much they try, self-publish and post a million tones on a message board, they are just shit. Often I find that people with talent, you have to search for them because they don't send stuff out, they are insular, you have to discover them. There's still a hell of a lot I'd like to put out which I can't because of lack of money and lack of time. You do have priorities. 'This one I really, really fucking like, but this one I only really fucking like' [laughs].

## DISCO "DIRTY BOOTLE - CHRISTINA AGUILERA GENIE IN A BOTTLE VS SONIC YOUTH DIRTY BOOTS"

FROM *THE BOOTY OF CHOICE* (OPASTICATED RECORDINGS) 2002

[Over guitar intro] This could be The Auteurs, but it's going to be a bit more majestic. [Vocals come in] So this is a version of Christina Aguilera's "Genie In A Bottle", done by someone in their sort of freestyle indie rock style. An act on my label, Bill Medler from Canada, has done a version of "Genie In A Bottle". He mashed up this song, did his own arrangement electronically. Maybe this is to stimulate a debate on covers, sampling. I don't know who this is.

**It's a booting recording of Christina Aguilera over Sonic Youth.**

Is it her actual vocals?

Yes.

Well I was quite right about freestyle indie rock. [Looks at cover] God, half of these tracks are Christina Aguilera over something: "Genie In A Bottle vs U2"; "U2 In A Bottle", it's called. Half the time it's the titles that are the best things about these.

**Does this booting activity interest you at all?**

No, I like sampling, but there's nothing particularly creative here, it's just like Darg when they did two records that go particularly well together. It's quite fun if you're Darg, but to release them - God! For a year in Rough Trade they had a section called "Booting Pop" or

something. There's only a few I like. The Richard X stuff (Singles) produced is really creative and pretty good. The one I really liked was Dismay's "Introduction," which was all made up of intros to tracks but it's absolutely brilliant – it's all mixed up and it makes a completely unique track out of it. But anyone can put two tracks together and get the tempo right. To think there was a scene around it, a few clubs, is worrying. The phrase "fucking rubbish" springs to mind.

## UNDERGROUND RESISTANCE "JUPTER JAZZ"

FROM THE COLDEST SHADE OF TECHNO (DESTRUCTIVE 1994)  
I know this: Underground Resistance, "Jupiter Jazz." I actually have this, the first track I actually own out of all the ones you've played. I haven't got this CD, I have it on 12", obviously. Yeah, I was very much into Underground Resistance from 91 onwards. The first track I got by them was the Sonic EP, which to me sounded like a rip-off of 808 State, and it was this sort of thing a couple of years before the EP. This was 92/93.

Yeah, very soulful. I was really into that Sonic EP. It sounds totally shit on this system, isn't there any bass? [Goes to machine] The dynamic bass boost button. I turned it on for you. See it's got a bass drum, not just hi-hats. It's got those whistly sounds that I've used, portamento sweepers...

UR's 'Mad' Mike Banks has taken an uncompromising stance defending Techno's underground status, as a way to remain true to itself. Do you sympathise with that attitude?

Definitely Underground Resistance as a label was fiercely independent. They tried to do everything themselves. They would never licence stuff to major label compilations. I think they'd had a few dealers before under different names, Irem and Jeff Mills – I don't know if they were called – and maybe they got their fingers burned. So they decided to keep it clean, in other words do it themselves. But that's fine. I do my own label because it's the only way you can get things done the way you want it done. Who cares if you can't get paid? As long as the CDs are the way you want them and they are slightly available then that's good.

Detroit Techno was very big in my life for two or three years. It was very difficult for me to start listening to Hardcore because I was so into that. That [track] sounds mellow, but if you listen to Derrick May it sounds fucking amazing. It has thousands of layers of meaning. Underground Resistance are good dance records, good soulful strings or whatever but with Derrick May there was so much in it. They were intricate tracks on so many different levels, but now he just plays cheesy House DJ sets.

## HERBIE HANCOCK "ACTUAL PROOF"

FROM FLEECED (SONY JAPANE 1979)

Sounds like dinner club jazz to me, slightly fusiony. There's piano, flute, bass and drums. Who the fuck's playing the piano? Herbie Hancock?

Yes, Herbie, yes.

Well he always has been slightly cheesy.

This was after Sextant and before Headhunters. This is a live album from 75.

It's getting a bit more freaked out now: swingers' party jazz, maybe. I liked Sextant. That had some weird electronics, which I'm a sucker for. I've got Headhunters and "Rocket" on 7" and the album just after to see if it was some good electro. It had a remix of "Rocket" with Bill Laswell: very chunky Linn drum sounds, very solid. It was actually a little bit inspirational for some of my Jake Shagener stuff, that more sound, more like the 808, like his briske of sound, it was wicked. The 808 always seemed so great for the dancefloor and punchy, but the 808 samples on my sampler sounded rubbish, really thin, so I tended to

use the latter ones. But I never listen to stuff like this. We thought that this sort of sound might have inspired your music.

I see what you mean, but when someone pisses around with arpeggios, they are going to sound like this, aren't they? A lot of jazz, when you let yourself go and start improvising, you're going to get off on one a bit like this. You've got a hand of a particular size that's going to reach for certain notes and it's when you can overcome that and do your own sort of sound that it starts to get interesting. I can't hear much in this above dinner club jazz music. A few of the chords are quite interesting, but it's not giving me any emotion, particularly. But Headhunters, because it had that detuned funk sound, it's got a sort of vibe to it, but the vibe to this is a mad 50s manic thing. It might be from 75 but it reminds me of the 50s, like waitresses buzzing around on rollerskates or something. I prefer solid beats like James Brown, or funk like The Meters. Those organ players with Hammond organ players, like Charles Earland, stuff like that – just grooves. I was listening to a lot of that in 86/87 when I was at school. This goes on a bit, doesn't it?

## GAPPA G AND HYPA HYPA "INFORMATION CENTRE" (DJ ROM REMIX)

FROM VARIOUS, DRUM & BASS SELECTION / BREAKDOWN 1993

This is from about 93. It was just starting to be called Jungle in 93. Fuck knows what it is. It could be D'Crux. It's hard to tell: a lot of these tracks sound the same. Those fusiony sounds are like 4 Hero's, but this couldn't be 4 Hero because those drums are very different. It's like Blame. I don't know.

It's Gappa G and Hypa Hypa.

I haven't got any of their records. [Looks at sleeve] I would have known some of the other tracks. I was trying to use breaks just before this. It was more in the Hardcore era, but I just had a drum machine. That's why my first couple of albums have pseudo drum breaks done by a drum machine. It's a nice track, except you can't hear the bass, which is an integral part of it.

Are you planning to put out some tracks by another unsung hero of this era, Remarc, on your label?

Yeah, next year. That's off Suburban Base, which is the label this compilation's from (Breakdown is a subsidiary label of SB). Most of it's from 95. Some of them started cutting up the beats about then and it was in the Hardcore era in terms of this mad drumming with the "Amen" break. All Remarc's best tracks use the "Amen" break, from "Amen Brother" by The Winstons. I really liked his stuff and I couldn't find all the 12's, so I thought why not put them out myself? They hadn't been on CD before, he'd never done an album so I just contacted him – he's got a lot of unreleased stuff so we're going to be putting some of that out as well.

What I liked about it was the altering of beats so it sounded like an inhuman drummer. I always tried to be slightly off-kilter with my rhythms – I always liked it when it wasn't in terms of this mad drumming with the "Amen" break. It was suddenly like that after Hardcore, which was sped-up loops, more or less. It was a great change that started off with Achrodette's "Urban Shakedown", where they suddenly brought in this massive sub-bass under the breaks. Then the breaks got so sped-up that the bassline was half speed, and it all changed very quickly. The drums sounded tiny and the bass drum was just a "click", so it had to be offset by an 808 boom under it. What I liked was the breaks; a lot of it's missing these days. A lot of it's very on the beat, almost rock dynamics, whereas up to 96 it was very much of a sound system vibe, reggae vibe. There was the weird music energy but with garage vibes – which I like. And that's totally gone, it's now some piled-up vibe.

You mentioned the off-kilter rhythms you use. Did drum 'n' bass filter into those, or would you have gone that way anyway?

Oh definitely. I was doing it anyway, because I was influenced by Mezz Beat Manifesto early on. When I started I wanted to do English Techno, something which was peculiarly for us. Aphex Twin was the first person I'd heard about. Techno which wasn't influenced by Detroit apart from Hardcore, which for me wasn't really Techno, it was some weird HiHop type of thing. I wasn't that into it until it turned into Jungle. When that came out I thought it was amazing. The track we just heard was on the cusp of where it became good. I've got lots of facts before the era where the breaks are so mumble and then it fed back into what they call 'n' bass, which is Jungle but not done by Junglists, I suppose.

## HEINZ FUNK ELECTRONIC COMBO "BARCAROLLE"

FROM VARIOUS, LUKE VIBERT'S MAGNETS SELECTION CD (RECORDINGS 1995)

It's one of these post-eclectic Easy Listening synthesiser albums isn't it? Like Jean-Jacques Perrey. Electronics, organs... it's not Dick Hyman is it?

We wonder if you might have heard this

1970s it was put together by Luke Vibert. It's 130/105 library music from the French studio, Genaro, which has remained in the vaults until recently.

I have these, but I'm fucked if I can get all the way through them. [Reads from cover] 'Proper, space age lounge music'. Well yeah, it is. Obviously as they've all been in a library for years I haven't heard them, but if I'd listened through this CD I might have. I was into Jean-Jacques Perrey for quite a while, mainly due to his tape loop rhythms. I like the old synth because they are nostalgic, but in the Jake Shagener stuff – which might sound specifically the same – I was really trying to be more of a Rare Groove Funk. It was more to do with synths playing with a funk band than TV theme tunes. But there was a touch of that there because we all grew up with synthesizers on TV doing quite a novel thing.

There's a sort of innocence to it, isn't there? There's something there which is quite sweet [skips to "Syncretized Motion" by Eddie Warner] Nice bit of funk drumming as well, very cool. That's a good break, might have to take that one later [laughs]. I love getting to know how drums work. When I played in a band I always had a bit of a thing about the drums. I was very loose whereas our drummer was extremely tight.

What was the name of the group?

Ble Innocence. We weren't particularly good. The name wasn't a good start, either.

## POLYGON WINDOW "QUOTH"

FROM SURFING ON SOME WAVES (NARAY 1992)

Ah, cool. I wondered when you were going to play me an Aphex track. I thought it would be "Dagendro". This one's a "Quoth" from Surfing On Some Waves, or the EP if you prefer. I have it here. I have it here. I've released in [Global Communication's] Mark Pritchard's house. It's another one of those tracks which you don't understand if you listen to it like this, but once you hear it in a club it suddenly makes sense.

I always thought he was totally separate. His music is earthy, very Cornish or English sounding. And he had his own sound, which was a mystical English countryside sound, very primal: whereas Techno was always about cries, his music would seem to be very countryside music, even this. The sounds are like dustbins or something and it sounds like it was recorded in a field. Before him, everything was really glossy in that Hardcore/rave scene.

What do you reckon to his Ambient music?

I love it, because it has such deep emotion in it. It's



Nuzzling it: Mike Paradise and a goat

so simple, but it's the quality of each sound on it. Selected Ambient Works 2, it takes a few listens before you're deeply into it. The first one I liked too, which was far less deep, very poppy. These tracks were all done in 1990, they were three years old [by the time they came out]. I'd heard them in '91, '92 round people's houses because there were a lot of Aphex tapes around before they were released. There was quite a buzz on him, as they were also played on the radio before they were released.

Aphex did electronics at Kingston University where I was studying architecture, but then he left to do music. We all used to party at Student Union nights and I dated at one of them. We had a mutual friend, Hal, who told me about Aphex, and after I discovered his music I asked Hal could he give him a tape [of mine]. And then we met up. Eventually I got on [his label] Rephlex. For electronic music he was one of the first people where you thought, 'Shit, this is something different.'

## GERM

### "TISH"

FROM PARADET (2009) 19:55

[Immediately] Electronic... tape music, this is very good – no idea what it is. It's electroacoustic, you've got your found sounds there being manipulated on tape with electronic sounds as well. It's not Morton Subotnick? No this is quite new, it's got drum machine in it. Reminds me a bit of the libent scene. Wouldn't be DJ Spooky or anything like that?

**It's British electronica artist GERM, aka Tim Wright, with Hilary Jeffrey playing processed trombone.**

[Tim Wright] does Garage stuff now as Tube Jerk. I liked it before the drum machine came in. Now it's got a bit too busy. Too busy for what? For me? [Laughs] No, it's interesting, I really like it. It's far more adventurous than the sort of things I do. It's very hard to bracket GERM's music into any genre.

Yeah, skittery insects. The trombone's a nice addition, isn't it? The range of pitch is so different from an electronic instrument. You can do that on a synth but it always sounds like a synth. Weird atmosphere, very tense yet relaxing. Maybe that's just the strong tea.

There's an electroacoustic element to Leafcutter John's music [on Planet Mu]. I suppose there's a connection. I suppose it's guys this decade taking inspiration from more academic music and trying to make it more relevant to what's happening in their lives; trying to do something that's personal to them.

For me the only people who overcame that were Luc Ferrari and [Bernard] Parmegiani, maybe [Tod] Dockstader, who put more of themselves into the music – maybe they just had more talent than the others? Who knows, but I just got off on that Parmegiani stuff 100 per cent more than any of that other sort of music. It's just perfectly in tune with me.

**Have you done any electroacoustic stuff yourself?**

I give it a go; I'm just shit at it. It's the same with vocal tracks. I try and do pop music but I'm rubbish at that as well. Whenever I try any other sort of music – whenever I try anything – I'm shit. I just have to do what I do without trying and it comes out a lot better.

These days I'm not doing much at all because of running the label. But it has to be done. I got dropped [from Hut] by EMI when they paid off Marsh Carey. They dropped loads of people. I always stuck out like a sore thumb on that label anyway. It was OK in the States because I went through Astralwerks, which was more of a dance label. I rang them up recently to see if they were interested in my album on Planet Mu. They said they were interested, but the deal they offered was ludicrous – I'd get about 25 cents per record. So I thought, I don't care if I do it myself and sell 20 times less, it's just not worth doing. It was a nice way of saying they weren't interested. □

# PHEW AND FAR BETWEEN

After her 1981 debut album featuring Conny Plank and Can members Holger Czukay and Jaki Liebeck, Japanese singer PheW promptly went underground. She only rarely resurfaced before the 90s, when she found her voice in solo and group projects like Novo Tono with Otomo Yoshihide, sampler duo Big Picture and the punk group Most with Boredoms guitarist Seiji Yamamoto. Words: Biba Kopf. Photos: Jun Takagi





**Blindly cutting across** Tokyo's Yoyogi Park to make an early afternoon appointment with the Japanese vocalist Phew, I crash through a small copse and all but collide with a kimono-clad pop performer with elaborately teased punk hair labouring a baloo drum for a mobile video promo crew. An exasperated voice loudly sighs something like "Cut," as I mist part the startled figure, his cockyboob quiff now crestfallen, while a puzzled female assistant examines her clipboard for script changes. "Sorry, no retakes," I snap. "Must dash."

It's difficult to imagine Phew subjecting herself to such indignities out of a desire to partake in the latest J-pop-punk indie boom. Nothing about the singer who breezes into the offices of her label P-Vine/Blues Interactions suggests she's overly burdened with a native eagerness to please. "We've met before," I remind her, once she's caught up with our translator, the musician Haruna Ito, from Skat. "Er?" she coughs, eyebrows arching up and mouth falling open in a theatrical expression of surprise that quickly dissolves into one of mock dismay. "Oh no, not AINE?" she laughs. That's right, I wince, dalling up a hastily arranged meeting 21 years earlier in a Shinjuku hotel room, when I knew nothing about her other than the fact that she had just recorded an album with members of Can. Her Krautrock fan of a label boss at Pass Records thought it would be good for her career to talk to the AINE anyway, but Phew wasn't playing. "You didn't say a thing," I say. "Sorry!" she laughs again, having already said more than she managed in the whole of that first ill-fated interview. And there it was: I feared Phew had planned a repeat performance.

From the beginning, Phew has gone her own decidedly idiosyncratic way in pursuit of the voraciously bracing, beguiling, seductive, sinister, unnerving and soul-shattering songs she has amassed over 25 years. The past 36 months have seen a slew of Phew releases old and new. Resuscitating her earliest releases alongside her latest projects, they underline just how far she has come while staying true to the initial impulses that nurtured an Osaka schoolgirl to form one of Japan's earliest punk groups, Aunt Sally, in 1978. Since then she has routed her music through the seaisak electronic shanties of her Ryuchi Sakamoto-produced 1980 debut single "Finale," and the oceanic rock improv of her first album Phew (1981), made in Germany with Can's bassist Holger Czukay and drummer Jaki Liebeck; and engineer/producer Conny Plank at Conny's legendary studio; the enchanted if slightly unsettling zones opened up between waking and dreaming by her rare Songs EP (1991) and *Himitsu No Kofu/Secret Kofu* CD (1999), the latter featuring turntablist/guitarist Goro Yoshitake. The one constant through all these different Phew manifestations is, of course, the Phew voice. Phew sings as she talks, in a pitch a few shades lower than is considered proper for nice Japanese women. Despite the growing numbers of women pursuing their own careers, in Japan the women's role is still considered to be wife and mother, and her social standing is encoded in the highly artificial, squeeze and sipping ickiegirlwoman voice women are expected to speak in when addressing superiors at home or in the workplace. "That woman are somehow the weaker sex and are therefore naturally subservient is a typically Japanese message and appears in many forms through many media," wrote veteran Japan watcher and film critic Donald Richie in 1980. "In television this major burden is carried by commercials

where, by implication, the women is only daughter, wife, homemaker and mother. In these roles she is identified almost entirely as a consumer." Though Japanese customs and mores have loosened considerably during the past few decades, mainstream popular culture still broadcasts such an infantile ideal of Japanese womanhood. At high school in Osaka, Phew decided that she wanted no part of it.

"When was 16 I just happened to turn on the TV and saw some live footage of The Sex Pistols," Phew remembers, "and immediately decided that I really had to see them. The following year, which was the summer of 1977, I flew to England and saw The Sex Pistols, and I realised this was not something you were supposed to watch, it was something you were supposed to do. Once back in Japan I immediately started to look for music shops to form a group, pinning up notices in music shops around Osaka. Eventually a friend of a friend told me that she had a friend of a friend who was a subscriber to New York Rocker. Her name was Blake, who became the guitarist in Aunt Sally. The CD release of their long deleted solo LP, Aunt Sally (Undo) and the newly released Aunt Sally Live 1978-1979 (P-Vine), are remarkable documents of a girl-fronted group asserting their own individuality in a largely male dominated rockzone. The rawly recorded yet exuberant live set charts the group finding their own voice, starting with wreckless yet spirited covers of The Ramones' "Blitzkrieg Boop", Tommy Roe's "Mony, Mony" and The Who's "My Generation", and gradually filling with Phew/Blake songs. Largely organ led, they wrongfooted poppunk punsters with numbers written in 3/4 time. "During the period when we were doing covers," Phew remembers, "we played a gig with a punk group called SS, who were also doing Ramones covers. When we saw them, I realised Aunt Sally couldn't go on the same way. We became more conscious of what we were doing, how to present ourselves. That's when things started to change. When I started writing my own material it ended up being totally different, musically speaking, though in my mind it had a common aim with punk. My songs were sort of closed, rather dark, slightly schizophrenic, typical teenage girl angst, and anger," she laughs. "If I think too much about them now, I'd blush."

"But it was very important to me to release an album while the punk thing was still happening in London," she continues. "Shortly after Aunt Sally formed, The Pistols broke up, and by the time we released the album, the momentum was gone because for me punk was The Pistols. Anyway, the album came out in spring 1979, and by early summer I had already decided that Aunt Sally was over."

Poor Aunt Sally. The punk bug bit Phew bad. You could argue that she has never truly recovered from it, using as evidence her refusal to compromise her music for the sake of a career. Punk's "do your own thing" dictat chimed well with her teenage seriousness and she's not about to sell it short now. "It would come as a surprise for the Aunt Sally Phew that I am still alive," shudders Phew now. "My whole lifestyle back then was quite horrendous. People might want to be young again, but it's never occurred to me to want to go back to being that age."

The Phew voice was not long in emerging out of the rams of Aunt Sally. Ryuchi Sakamoto, then a member of the highly successful Yellow Magic Orchestra, had expressed an interest in the group, and he followed through on it by producing her debut solo single "Finale", a song begun in the last days of Aunt Sally.

"At the time I didn't have any clear notion of what I wanted to do," says Phew. "I had a vague idea that I liked The Flying Lizards, but that was all. I was 19, a very subtle age to be, and felt that unless I did something, I would go crazy." Phew hammed the tunes onto a cassette sent to Sakamoto, who subsequently flooded her voice through a slow-churning snareless sea of sound. It still stands as one of her finest releases. Yet his success wasn't enough to quell her punk doubts about what she was doing and the scene she was doing it in. "When the single came out," she grumbles, "it didn't get me accepted musically. It created an image of me as a rather interesting, eccentric girl, and its success left me in a state of confusion about my musicality."

More positively, it did subsidize her flight to Germany to record her debut album, *Phew* (Pass 1983). At Conny's studio with legendary engineer/producer Conny Plank, Holger Czukay and Jaki Liebeck. "I had nothing prepared for it," Phew recalls. "We just entered the studio and started jamming. This was the first time I had participated in the spontaneous generation of music, and it had a profound influence on me, seeing the way pieces were created by bouncing the music off the different musicians. If I hadn't met someone like Conny Plank and had that experience, I probably wouldn't be making music now."

"While we were jamming in the studio," she continues, "I was having to come up with lyrics. The three of them would saunter into the room and say, 'Are you done? And I had no choice except to concentrate and come up with stuff. It was extremely difficult. Before Aunt Sally and punk, I was a huge fan of Can and Krautrock. [Can's] *Future Days* was a very big record in my life, and I used to listen to it over and over. And of course the name Conny Plank was a 'written in the clouds' God type thing, so to be in the studio working with someone who was to me a godly presence, not to mention the others, who are great musicians, had a very great impact on me. Here I was, a 20-year-old girl, and they were treating me as an equal. They were very modest and extremely frank people, and this had a great impact on me. In Japan, my experience was mostly the opposite—not very good musicians behaving like they were big stars. Because that is what I was used to in Japan, it made it all the more surprising to encounter these great musicians who were also great people."

At Conny's studio Phew discovered her affinity with German drumming, even though she believes drumming more than anything is related to the pulse of language. "I was planning to study linguistics at college when I formed Aunt Sally and dropped out," she explains. "I was always fascinated by the linguistic aspect of language, and this had led to my understanding that music is about language, that in fact music is a language, and the music a person makes is dictated to a certain degree by their mother tongue. And I feel that very strongly. You can hear it particularly in the drumming. Listen to a German drummer and you will be able to detect the influence of the German tongue on his playing, and that goes for other nationalities."

Phew returned to Conny's studio a decade later to record *Our Likeness* (Mute 1993) with a new generation of German stars, namely ex-DaF/Liberson Donders electronic genius Chrisio Haas, Einstürzende Neubauten guitarist Alex Hacke and drummer Liebeck again. Phew's two German-made albums have their fine moments, but they suffer a

little from a similar urge of both sets of musicians to make like Toru Takemitsu soundtracking a ghost movie, dropping wobbly, clanking sounds behind her as if they were trying to make her jump. Fortunately Phew is not so easily spooked, and her voice cuts straight and true through the electronic mist. What she brought away from that first trip to Conny's in particular had both positive and negative effects in the strengthening of musical resolve. "It was such an enormous experience being at Conny's," says Phew, "working with these incredible musicians, that once I was back in Japan the comedown was just too great. The huge god between where I was and what I returned to overwhelmed me. I didn't know what to do any more." It took Phew five years to work out where she would go from there, during which time an aura had grown around the mysterious ex-punk who had recorded with the likes of Sakamoto and Czukay. When she returned to performing on the back of a new Japanese made album, *View*, in 1987, legend has it that queues formed around the blocks of Tokyo clubs to see her. However she still had far too much punk in her to take it seriously. "It wasn't as big a deal as you might have heard," scoffs Phew. "For one, venues were small. This was the period of the first indie band boom, which was distasteful in itself. And though I had deliberately absented myself, I was already being seen as 'the legendary Phew.' The whole 'legendary Phew comeback' thing disagreed with me."

Another lengthy stretch of silence ensued, for Phew was not about to be rushed. Her desire for something new was tempered by her lack of enthusiasm for the oncoming digitization of sound ushered in with Japan's first digital synthesizer, the synclavier. She remembers, "I went to have a look at what was basically the future of sound, the future of recording, and in many ways the future of music making, and I just couldn't relate to it." Phew found herself thrown back on to her first resource: her voice. The Phew related records that began emerging in 1991 showcase a stronger, more confident musician happy to work in various different settings because she's secure in the knowledge one isn't compromising the other. On first exposure it can sound like she has deliberately drained her voice of all expression, like she was singing darkly shadowed speech bubbles. But she's capable of putting even these most basic of her sound components to good effect. On the best parts of her fabulous Songs EP (1991 Sectary), for example, her slightly delayed delivery drags behind the beat, causing the piece's several layers to separate, which creates an unpredictable pattern of ghost pulses as her speech bubbles pass over them. The speech bubble effect is still present on her finest 'rock' album *Himitsu No Kite/Secret Kite* (Creative Music Discs 1995), featuring turntable and guitar contributions from Otono Yoshitake, to whom Phew is dedicating them at the same time to modulate the music's moodswings. These effective techniques weren't acquired overnight. Phew describes a period when she tried to be a singer like Juliet Greco. "Apart from Johnny Rotten," she says, "the two singers I loved the most were Elvis Presley and the French chanson singer Juliet Greco. I wanted to have the presence of someone like Greco, but I failed. I just wasn't good enough," she continues, laughing. "I was bad and was confronted with the glaring fact of how bad I was when I tried to cover Presley and Greco. But in my defense, I'd like to say I always wanted to sing in my own language. Japanese is an extremely difficult language for expressiveness in song when you compare it with languages like German or particularly

French, which has so many ways of singing consonants and nasally projecting the voice, making it a lot more interesting to listen to as sound. In French you can take a vowel like 'ah', and you can sing bright and dark variations of it and every shade in between. That's not the case in Japanese. Listen to the TV news and you'll hear how boring the language sounds. Basically, the delivery of the Japanese language needs to be flat for it to sound natural, and singers and actors have always battled with this. You do get performers who try to unusually place emphasis on certain parts of words, but it sounds unnatural to me to listen to Japanese pop singers singing in Japanese with an English inflection, or Japanese HiPop artists performing with an extremely American inflection in their delivery."

In common with other underground musicians in Tokyo, where she has been based for the best part of the past few decades, Phew has evolved a strategy for survival that reconciles economic necessity with a growing spread of musical interests. Essentially, this means she has developed a number of different projects, all of them up and running, circumstances allowing. Her ongoing projects include Novo Tono, the experimental rock group she shares with Otono, Boredoms/Rova guitarist Seiichi Yamamoto and others; Phew and her film composer partner Hyeouka Nagashima's *sampiedeko* duo, *Big Picture*; and, finally, Phew and Yamamoto's roadhouse punk group *Most*. "Big Picture consists of samples and my singing," Phew explains, "I love doing it and it's very important to me, but there are a lot of difficulties surrounding the presentation of Big Picture live simply because it is electronic. When you put an electronic band up against a raw live band, then the difficulties of the former in getting something across are pretty obvious. And Novo Tono are important for me, because it's a project that I can pursue at any time in my career. I could be 60 or 70 and it would still be Novo Tono, so long as I can get together with Otono, Yamamoto and the others."

Yamamoto also plays an important role in her punk group *Most*, which is currently the most active of her projects. It's not punk like Aunt Sally, and has nothing to do with the 'punk boom' that periodically rocks the floor of Japan's music megastores. Rather, it's a powerful vehicle for Phew's rawest roars, reved up by Yamamoto's reverb heavy guitar. "Unlike Europe, where you have a support system for avant garde or experimental music, there's an absolute lack of any such support systems in Japan," says Phew. "This means that Japanese musicians have had to spend a lot of time overseas in order to progress and pursue their careers as musicians. This is not an option for me, and that's why I have decided to focus a great deal on *Most* and be a 'pop' singer. Well, *Most* is about as accessible as I can get."


"The way music is listened to continues to change," she reasons. "But I'm convinced that years from now people will still want to experience music live. And *Most* is the form through which I can most easily communicate and express what I want, and to which people will continue to come and listen. When I thought about where I wanted to be a decade, 15 or 20 years from now, I realised it's in a live house, as we call clubs in Japan, and I want to be there playing music rather than being enshrined in some museum of Japanese rock 'n' roll." □ For more Phew information, go to [www.japanpunk.com](http://www.japanpunk.com). Thanks to Haruna Ito for translation







# BUILT FOR SPEED



Textually hyperdense and accelerated for the televisual age, the multimedia music theatre of composer Robert Ashley has been called the future of opera, as well as the first to exploit the unique rhythms of the American voice. Following this year's premiere of his new work *Celestial Excursions*, Thom Holmes meets the composer to discuss his founding role in the Sonic Arts Union, his love of TV, and his celebration of life on the margins. Photos: Chris Buck

"Popular music always ends after three minutes," remarks Robert Ashley without a hint of judgment in his voice. In his Tribeca studio in downtown New York, we're talking about the opera he's been writing since the mid-70s, which leads to a discussion of popular song. He pauses, forking his next sentence. "Popular music, when it works, reminds us of something we already know, or it reminds us of something we've already experienced. It turns back the hands of time to something that we know from experience. It puts a label on that thing."

Even at 72 years old, Ashley exists in defiance of history, and he continues to move ahead at an accelerating clip. He is always composing and touring, completing a new opera about every three years and following it with select performances that might take him across the United States and over to Europe and Japan. He edits his conversation with great care, as if determined to verbalise the best take of each thought. He and partner Mimi Johnson live in an old brick warehouse that was converted into residential lofts back in the 70s. She runs Lovely Music, the record label devoted to documenting key works of the American electronic and electroacoustic avant garde. The two are longtime residents, occupying two floors – one for their studio and the other for their living space. Today, the windows are open due to the warm weather. Ashley's computers, keyboards and recording equipment are clustered in the centre of the space underneath a marquee-like canopy. The tent is there to protect the equipment from falling crumbs of concrete and ceiling plaster while the roof undergoes repairs.

Despite the disruption, Ashley never loses his train of thought. "That's why so much popular music has to do with labels," he continues. "It puts a label on it and when it's good, that label really works. It can't do anything but that, no matter how hard people try. No matter how hard Bob Dylan tried or John Lennon tried, you can't make popular music into anything except a labelling of your own experience that you never realised needed a label." He sits up straight and places the palms of his hands firmly on the table in front of him. "Opera doesn't do that. Opera is supposed to present you with characters in the same way that a great novel presents you with characters. In that sense, it becomes eternal. You're supposed to be able to see it because it's brought to you. That's the totally different part labelling an experience. You have to continually refer back to what human beings know. My job is to establish those characters."

We have just crossed the line where popular music ends and opera begins. Welcome to Robert Ashley's territory.

Ashley often talks about history, perhaps because he had such a hand in forging it. He and his contemporaries were initially linked to John Cage and David Tudor through a variety of encounters and collaborations in the 1960s, and then went on to become the most consistent practitioners of American experimental music into the 70s. This "post-Cage generation" – Ashley, Gordon Mumma, Alvin Lucier and David Behrman – acquired their initial momentum through their founding of The Sonic Arts Union (1968-76), a mutually supportive thinktank for live experimental music. If Cage and Tudor represented the first wave of live electronic music production – the use of magnetic tape and the amplification of small sounds – then Ashley, Mumma, Lucier and Behrman in their offshoots represented four extensions of that tradition, each introducing musical practices that are still being explored and utilised today.

Ashley's contribution consisted of his attempts to seamlessly integrate electronic performance with

human performance. One of the earliest and most notorious examples was *The Woman* (1964), where he played his own vocals through loudspeakers simultaneously with a tape composition and controlled the feedback by putting his mouth up against the mic. The avalanche of noise was "so overpowering to the listener that no one ever understands how the sound is made".

The Woman was emblematic of the performance pieces Ashley created during his years in Ann Arbor, Michigan, particularly with Gordon Mumma for Milton Cohen's Space Theater (1967-64), and with Mumma and others for the ONCE Festivals (1961 and 1965). Ashley was constantly experimenting with combinations of available technology and live performers. His 60s portfolio is a mélange of performance approaches, including purely electronic works for tape such as *Big Danger in Five Parts* (1964) and *Untitled Mums* (1965), and soundtracks for the experimental films of George Mnupelli.

The ONCE Festival became a remarkable laboratory for new Music and mixed media before Ashley and Mumma wound it down in 1966 in Ann Arbor to concentrate on other outlets and contexts for their music. While Mumma went to work with Tudor, Cage and the Merce Cunningham Dance Company (see *The Wire* 216), Ashley extended his forays into electronic music theatre into works he called operas for voices, dancers and tape. Drawn from his own *That Morning Thing* (1967), *She Was A Visitor* (1967), for speaker and chorus, was an early work featuring the soothing drone of his voice. The repeated line "She was a visitor" cascades gently, sleepily, into a chanted murmur, as an accompanying chorus freely repeats given phrases from the sentences. Ashley listened it to the process of rumour mongering, where the content of the original message becomes distorted and transformed with repetition.

But one morning in April 1968, he decided to stop composing altogether. Fully intending the decision to be final, his reasons were many, such as the economic pressures of trying to produce concerts while eking out a living with day jobs. With little money available for composers, he began to believe that "there was no reality" to his dreams. He had also been deeply discouraged by one of the last performances of the young ONCE Group, when the audience physically assaulted the musicians.

"The performance we did at Brandeis [1968] was a beautiful piece called *Night Train*," Ashley recalls. "It involved, among a lot of other things, giving the audience something when they came in. The idea of the piece was that we were aliens trying to make friends with the Earth people. So, everybody who came in along with their ticket got something edible, like an apple or an onion or a fish or a loaf of bread or something like that. Somehow in the middle of the performance the audience kind of let it start and started attacking us. They were throwing things... Besides the hard pieces of vegetable, like an onion, we were passing out lights. [Architecture professor] Harold Borkin had a group of ten or so students there who were soldering one end of a flashlight bulb to one end of a battery and then soldering a wire to the other end of the battery. When the audience started throwing things, I knew we were in deep trouble. It was through the performance but it was very ugly. It was very discouraging. I had had enough. I didn't compose music for another five years."

Though he had stopped composing, Ashley didn't remove himself entirely from the world of New Music. The Sonic Arts Union gave him a way to perform

without having to actually compose. He also took the job of Director of the Center for Contemporary Music at Oakland's Mills College in 1969, revisiting one of the most influential music programmes in the country after several of its founding members – most notably Morton Subotnick and Pauline Oliveros – had left to pursue other opportunities. Ultimately, it was Mimi Johnson who challenged Ashley to return to composing, saying, "Well, if you are a famous composer, you've got to compose music."

But where to begin? During the 1960s, technology and the arts had evolved significantly. By the early 70s, video production equipment was affordable for independent artists, and experimental electronic music flourished with the accessibility of synthesizers, integrated circuits, and other byproducts of the burgeoning computer industry. "I had been working for years on an idea of an opera whose characters were all my composer friends," says Ashley, "and they would be represented in the opera by their music and by their conversation. I tried to make it work in about five different ways. Finally, when I figured out that I could do it on videotape, it just came together very quickly."

This work became Ashley's first extended "opera" for television, *Music With Roots In The Aether* (1976). The work is a 14 hour TV opera/documentary featuring the author and ideas of seven American composers: David Behrman, Philip Glass, Alvin Lucier, Gordon Mumma, Pauline Oliveros, Terry Riley and Ashley himself. More portraiture than conventional operatic narrative, this video profiles lovingly showed the artists in action rather than attempting to explain their work. After premiering at the Festival d'Automne à Paris in 1976, Aether has been shown in different countries on TV or as an installation.

Ashley followed *Aether* with *Automatic Writing*: 46 minutes of music so quiet that it's mostly inaudible at normal volume settings. The underlying keyboard sound making up one layer of its texture is so muted, it sounds like it's coming from another room. The base element of *Automatic Writing* is the spoken voice, close-miked, uttering what Ashley characterises as "involutionary speech": random comments, mutterings and disconnected conversational fragments picked up off the street. But, more than the words, for Ashley the shape and timbre of the voice, the levels of its amplification and the musical accompaniment are all significant musical resources. "In *Automatic Writing* I had become interested in the idea of characters in an operatic or dramatic sense," he says. "Of characters actually being manifested through a particular sound. It was fumbling around looking for ways I could work in an operatic sense that would be practical. I didn't want to start writing things that wouldn't be performed for 25 years without forming a group."

*Automatic Writing* was frequently lauded as an early Ambient piece, in the wake of the late 70s recordings of Brian Eno and John Cage, because of its quiet, tinkling qualities. At the same time, its sparse repetitions caused others to bracket it with the minimalist pulse works of Steve Reich and Philip Glass. Consisting largely of spoken dialogue, it was also dubbed a "text sound" composition. While all those descriptions are superficially accurate, most attempts to categorise *Automatic Writing* are ultimately unhelpful, for they fail to take account of the way Ashley was attempting to access a new form of musical storytelling using the English language. He recalls, "I went toward the idea of sounds having a kind of magical function – of being able to actually create trajectories. It seemed to me that in a sort of psycho-physical sense sounds can actually make you see things, can give you images that are quite specific."



The watershed composition in Ashley's portfolio is *Perfect Lives* (1983), an opera for TV in seven half-hour episodes. *Perfect Lives* evolved from the two-part *Private Parts* (1979), the two "private" parts eventually becoming the bookends for the bigger work. In *Perfect Lives*, Ashley's hypnotic voice is at the centre of a maelstrom of pulsing electronics. He tells the story of two musicians conspiring to stage a prank bank robbery in a small Midwest American town. A series of encounters with other characters – an elderly couple, elderly people at a rest home, the sheriff and his wife – leads to a solution of the mystery behind the robbery.

Ashley was working on *Perfect Lives* during a period flushed with innovative approaches to opera: Philip Glass and Robert Wilson had staged *Einstein On The Beach* in 1976, and Laurie Anderson was producing her mammoth *United States IV* (1979-83). Glass and Wilson's opera is emphatically instrumental – one couldn't escape the familiarity of the Glass sound. Anderson's *United States* is determinedly visual with its barrage of projected images, but a great many American voices speak through Anderson, as the work's sole performer. In contrast, Ashley's opera focuses on a union of character, story and an abundance of words. The instrumental portion of his music, while always integral to the performance, is subsumed by the continuous chattering of the characters. There's no cult of personality, only people and their stories.

*Perfect Lives* has been called both the first American opera, and the future of opera. Not only has it been performed live, it's also one of Ashley's only productions to achieve some success on the small screen, having been shown on TV in half a dozen countries. With its voices buoyed up by electronic rhythms and chords that flap along with the words like the decorated tail of a kite, *Perfect Lives* set the pattern for much of the composer's subsequent work. His development of characters, accessible electronic scores, precision timing, even his choice of musicians and vocalists all evolved from it.

Ashley likes his operatic output between 1980-95 to be TV series without a name. It consists of three groups of operas, of which *Perfect Lives* is now considered the middle section. The first is a trilogy called *Atlantica* (Acts Of God) (1985), which interprets the story of Europe's origins through anecdotes about surrealist painter Max Ernst, shamanic storyteller Willard Reynolds and bob poetist Bud Powell. While *Perfect Lives* revels in the values of present day middle America, the third instalment is a quartet known collectively as *Now Eleanor's* (1993) and relates the history of religion through episodes about Judaism, Protestantism, Catholicism and the "religions" of big business and science. In Ashley's world, the individual is always at odds with the establishment. The underlying theme of his work is the sanctity of the individual in an unforgiving world.

Ashley's most recent works, such as *Dust* (2000) and, currently, *Celestial Excursions* (2003), take a more inward look at the human condition. *Dust* features the imagined thoughts of various park dwellers and down and outs who "live on the fringe of society". Five readers occupy transparent booths facing the audience. The front pane of each booth is electronically modulated between opaque and clear, obscuring or revealing the readers as required. Overhead, many of the words spoken are projected on a video screen, like afterimages of vocal ideas.

*Celestial Excursions* ventures into the confined quarters of an old people's home, whose senile residents struggle to remain tethered to reality. It

premiered in Germany last March, and made its US debut in April in New York. This trajectory reveals how his works have evolved thematically from a broader concern with government, religion, history, and culture to a closer, more microscopic view of the individuals who make up Western society. "The characters I am interested in," he elaborates, "are marginal, because everybody is marginal compared to the stereotypes. Even though I am very interested in their profoundly good qualities, even though I'm not interested at all in evil, the characters in my work are as bizarre and unreal as the characters in William Faulkner. They just happen to be ordinary people who are spiritually diverse. And that's why I can't get on television."

Despite all the international premieres and tours, the TV screen remains Ashley's preferred medium. "I've been thinking in terms of television for 25 years," he says, "despite not having much success in making television and not much encouragement. The television situation for anyone like myself now is pretty discouraging. It is so much more conservative than it was 25 years ago."

But Ashley remains hopeful, even though he knows that the production of radical video work for television has hit a long dry spell. "The game is not over," he declares. "It's just that in the last few years the corporations and advertisers saw television as a huge resource. So I didn't win that game. I have a strong feeling that perhaps the disgruntled public will force television to come up with some new subject matter. That may open up the door for music. If it does, the door will only be open for a few seconds. Somebody may get in there."

Among his work at mass audiences reflects his belief in empowering alternative voices in society. His characters, unglamorous and marginalised, run counter to TV stereotypes. "My feeling," he argues, "is that everybody, in our unhealthy, neurotic media environment, is on the fringe, except for the stereotypes. There's nobody like the people on television. They don't exist in the real world, including the newsmen and the weather reporters. It is becoming more and more realiser that even people who have a very serious real-life existence – like professional athletes – you can see them being transformed yearly into stereotypes."

The key to Ashley's work is speed. Television has accelerated human perception and nowadays it's infinitely faster than 25 years ago, when he was making his first video works. "Tempo has been entirely neglected in opera for 100 years," he explains. "It's about time we got interested in tempo, because it has made a big comeback in many aspects of our lives." The pace of commercial radio is a case in point. "I'm fascinated by the speed in fast radio. The announcers speak at an unbelievable rate. But they make it sound so casual that you think that they're talking at an ordinary pace. You think that they're sounding like you. Actually, they're talking twice as fast as I am. I've never heard people talk faster than this, and I know people who really talk fast. Within 12 seconds they give you the news, the weather, everything, plus two or three ads. It's totally incredible."

"The essence of my music," he continues, "is that the syllables go by as fast as they do in the American English language and the pitch stresses, which make one syllable more important than the other syllable, are at within a range of half an octave. It's like you squeeze it in one direction and expand it in another direction. I've always been interested in tempo because it's a big, big factor in

vocal music. The other factors, like melody, have been used up for the time being."

For the last ten years, Ashley has composed for the same group of accomplished vocalists: Tom Buckner, Jackie Humbert, Sam Ashley and Joan La Barbara. A frequent collaborator on the electronic elements of his music is fellow composer Tom Hamilton. This ensemble recently completed eight performances of his latest piece, *Celestial Excursions*, at The Kitchen in New York's Chelsea district. Ashley and Hamilton are now busy producing a CD based on this run.

*Celestial Excursions* – scored for five vocalists, electronic orchestration and piano – doesn't sound like most people's conception of opera. At the premiere, Ashley's four vocalists and the composer himself sat unassumingly at their own small tables, lined up facing the audience in front of the stage. At stage left, keyboardist Blue Gene Tyranny (aka Robert Shiff), a longstanding composer and performer on NYC's avant music scene) took up position at a grand piano. The rest of the stage was the operating theatre for improvising dancer Joan Jonas, who moved silently and ghostlike throughout the night, articulating the nuances of Ashley's work, raplike libretto with her body. Additional music, composed by Ashley using MIDI software, was played through a Kurzweil keyboard controlled by Hamilton, positioned at the rear of the theatre.

The plot of *Celestial Excursions* revolves around four elderly people who've been placed in an assisted-living home. "They're not the kind of active elderly people that you read about, like business gypsies, Wall Street gypsies, or John Gade," explains Ashley. "These people are the kind of people who have been marginalised in our society, even by their own families."

The environment consists entirely of other old people. "There's a new set of rules that comes with being there," he continues. "That gives rise to very peculiar and personal meditations. The things they say and the things they apparently think about are not necessarily the things you would associate with good citizenship. They're strange sometimes. Sometimes they're very radical. They go to extremes." Ashley plays the part of a counsellor at the assisted-living home. He says, "Basically it's just a dialogue between him and those four other people who are complaining about getting old."

The score runs to more than 130 pages, with the text laid out in parallel columns. Each vocalist has a column to read. The piece would be daunting for any ensemble not accustomed to working with Ashley. To maintain timing and an even pace, each vocalist wears an in-ear monitor playing back a click track tuned to middle C and Ashley's voice counting the measures. The pulse is a rapid (for opera) 100 beats per minute. "Everybody is singing all the time," explains the composer gleefully. "We start with a solo by Joan [La Barbara] and the other three vocalists are a kind of chorus. I tried to make all of the choruses different in some recognisable way so that you don't get the same chorus activity for each piece. In the dialogue itself, there is a calculated rotation of the voices speaking to the counsellor. The pattern of that rotation changes according to the plan of the piece."

The work is dense with words, with the singers hovering around the pitch most comfortable to them. This is part of Ashley's design for working with English. "I have never read the why American composers have tried to adapt American English speech to a European style," he states. "Which, if you listen to every opera that has ever been written by an American composer, has basically come down to one syllable per note. My idea is that American English



doesn't have the kinds of vowel sounds that allow for vocal embellishment of the vowel sounds as in Italian, and of course Italian is our model. There are very few pure vowels in American English. Most American English vowels are diphthongs or vowel sounds that are attached to resonant consonances.

"My main idea has been to make American English sound like American English in the same way that Tosca sounds like spoken Italian. I want it to sound like the way we speak English. That means that the syllables have to go by at a faster rate."

The words are spoken, declared, sung and spouted as if from a secret interior dialogue. The piece's texture is dictated by the threads of voices that unwind, combine and sometimes weave together in a torrent of symmetrical patterns. The traditional way of developing character in stage productions is by placing them in dialogue with other people. *Celestial Excursions* defies this convention by presenting characters without context. "There's no excuse, there's no context at all," says Ashley. "Which I thought would be appropriate to this idea of a group of old people in a home. You don't know where they come from. You don't know who their relatives are. They have no relationship to each other or at the most a casual relationship. All you have to go on in terms of character is just what they tell you. What's on their mind. In this opera I was hoping that I could have five characters who were clearly characters unto themselves but are not presented to us as the result of a story."


The instrumental accompaniment to *Celestial Excursions*, created by sampling the vocal patterns of the singers and arranged into "orchestral literatures" controlled by Tom Hamilton, shifts continuously from a symphony of chords and articulated notes to waves of quiet noise that lend a haunting reverberation to the prevailing atmosphere. Blue Gene Tyranny's amplified piano part is, by design, disconnected from the singers. "There are so many amazing sounds that can be made on the piano with some combination of the three pedals, and that you rarely hear in ordinary piano playing. So I asked Blue Gene to make up a programme of those very unusual sounds for himself and to think of his piano playing as accompanying Joan."

Constantly changing shape with the aid of a rack of clothes, capes, masks and long linen drapes, dancer Joan Jones provides what Ashley calls "additions to my very dumb, simple idea of a person just getting ready for the day".

"Dumb, simple" ideas such as these have been the lifeblood of the composer's work for nearly 50 years. Throughout it all he somehow manages to rescue everyday moments and launch them onto the stage with a gripping fascination. He shares this ability with some of the greatest writers and artists of the 20th century. If James Joyce were alive today, he would probably be trying to write operas like Robert Ashley.

Ashley is thoughtful as the light of late afternoon dims, taking in the clamour of traffic and voices that rises from the street, six floors below. "There's nothing that makes you happier than going fast," he concludes. "That's one of the basic rules of life." □ Robert Ashley's major works are available on *Lovely Music* and *Alga Marghen*, who have just issued *The Wolfman*. Thom Holmes is the author of *Electronic And Experimental Music: Pioneers in Technology And Composition* (Routledge 2002)

Screens from Robert Ashley's *Celestial Excursions* at Berlin's Hebbel Theatre, summer 2003, with (bottom) the composer as narrator



# THE FIRE DOWN BELOW

Welcome to the New Weird America: a groundswell musical movement rising out of the USA's backwoods, one that offers an alternative to the no wave revivalism of the nation's urban centres. Loosely called free folk, the music draws on an intoxicating range of avant garde sounds, from acoustic roots to drone, ritualistic performance, Krautrock, ecstatic jazz, hillbilly mountain music, psychedelia, archival blues and folk sides, Country funk and more. David Keenan takes the stagecoach to Vermont's Brattleboro Free Folk Festival, where he meets prime movers Sunburned Hand Of The Man (pictured right), Scores, Matt Valentine/Tower Recordings, Dredd Foole, Six Organs Of Admittance, Chris Corsano & Paul Flaherty, and more. Photos: Chris Buck







Late Saturday night at the Cottarmill, a huge warehouse space in downtown Brattleboro in the state of Vermont, Texan pedal steel player and throat conjurer Heather Leigh Murray is tearing at the strings of her instrument with her bare hands, her eyes bobbing like pennies in her skull. As part of the Scoreso duo she shares with guitarist Christina Carter, she's going head to head with another free improvising unit, seagaphead Paul Flaherty and drummer Chris Corsano, whose lungs, fists, elbows and heads have already pushed this impromptu ensemble way past any notions of dialogue or musical exchange and out into the realms of pure spontaneous sound. As Flaherty and Carter make for the flanks, the central kernel of Corsano and Murray blur into a motive cacophony. Corsano's well-worn felt knocks dents into his cymbals, while Murray collapses in sobs over her floored pedal steel, tearing electric resonant forms from an instrument that's more usually associated with the sea-scented constrictions of weepy Country ballads. Out front, a long slow scream travels between audience members, as they pick up on the prodigious energy coming from the stage and start chattering it right back. Caught up in this bacchanalian loop, it feels like the entire venue is dissolving in sound.

"I am the music," Murray later insists, echoing the late free saxophonist Albert Ayler. "There is no separation." As she's led away to have her lacerated hands bandaged, Boston's Sunburned Hand Of The Man begin setting up, with three drum kits positioned in the middle of the audience, percussionists all over the room, a wall of guitars and a holster full of brass, electronics and bass. Vocalist, MC and sometime drummer John Moloney calls out a dedication to James Brown on his birthday and bassist Rob Thomas hits a groove that sounds like Captain Beefheart's "Big Eye Beans From Venus" as the sprawling orchestra explodes the already volcanic energy levels. Soon the whole house is on its feet, and it's impossible to tell who's playing and who's a spectator once they drop into an acid hillbilly stomp and Moloney takes a cartwheeling flip off the stage. Drummer Corsano rears the flag, with guest percussionist Tim Barnes beating out a barrage on the snare Corsano has balanced on his head, while Murray also returns, a vision in plasters and a gold-rimmed '70s gown and scarf, firing blasts of their own kind of beats before breaking off into a series of moves that are half ghost dance, half Saturday Night Fever. This is improvised music that impacts on the ass as much as the third eye, that draws from mountain music, Country blues, HipHop, militant funk and psychedelia as much as free jazz. And the group look fantastic, a crew of bearded freak brothers and sisters, greasers and street toughs, all chasing the sound of the no-mind. "I was telling everyone before we played that I'd slip a knife between the ribs of the first man to play rock," Moloney shrugs. "But look what happened."

Welcome to the New World America.

The past few years have seen an explosion in the sort of genre mangling grassroots activity that Sunburned Hand Of The Man, Flaherty/Corsano and Scoreso represent. Mostly based out of the major US cities, disparate, culturally disenfranchised cells have begun to telegraph between each other, forming alliances via limited handmade releases and a vast subterranean network of zine/distro publications, musician- and fan-run labels and distributors like Apostasy, Circle Of Microtones, Ecobase, Ecobase Yod, Sirens, Sirens, Sirens, Sirens, Sirens, Sirens, Sirens Of Orr, Time-Lag, U-Sound, Vhf and Wholly Other. This particular cottage industry came into existence initially out of necessity, as no one else would touch this

music. Since then it has grown in strength and ambition, developing into what musician Ben Chasny (of Six Organs Of Admittance and Comets On Fire) now describes as a conscious attempt to create "a web of inspiration and beauty that will bypass all of the mundane aspects of whatever we call art, like museums and galleries and eBay and bullshit record collection".

Self-publishing has always entailed challenging works of art to interact with the world where they're at their most potent. It's also a mess of artistic seriousness. And just as small press journals provided a platform for otherwise unpublishable work in the 60s and 70s, so today the increasing affordability and accessibility of home publishing and CD burning, along with the globe-spanning reach of the Internet, have conspired to energise a new generation of fringe operators. With the threat of an increasingly censorious US state and the blinkered consensus reiterated by the 'news-entertainment complex', the need to force alternative channels of communication feels more urgent than ever.

The Brattleboro Free Folk Festival, headlined on the first night by Sunburned Hand Of The Man, represents the first major coming together of this vague movement, an attempt to muster the same recurrent, archetypal forms that archivist and mystic Harry Smith saw manifest in the American folk music of the early 20th century and documented in his *Anthology Of American Folk Music*. At this year's Free Folk Fest in the first week of May, outsider voices from an earlier generation were joined by lone visionaries, hermetic isolationists, young marginalised artists, hippy revolutionaries, Country purists, ex-cons, project kids, avant experimentalists, auditive neofuturists, psychedelic rockers and assorted merrits in an attempt to make space for an alternative American narrative, irreconcilable with the prevailing neoconservative vision of the 'New American Century'. And like Smith before them, many of the main players regard their music as a potential catalyst for social change.

Although the players' interpretation of what constitutes 'folk music' is unusually wide, they all relate to traditional folk forms in several significant ways. Primarily, the music is an expression of a self-supporting community of like-minded individuals, all dedicated to finding their own voice and crafting art as free from outside influence as possible. You really have to know what you're looking for, as many recordings come adorned with little more than a kind of system of sigils, a code that provides an effective bulwark against potentially corrupting influences. This culture has sprung up around live music, with the various recordings coming out of it serving more as rough-as-nail archival snapshots or documents of work in progress than 'finished' commercial product. Indeed, events like the Free Folk Fest feel more like social get-togethers than festivals. Everyone seems to know each other, and many of the musicians have played together before. Over two days, members are shed and traded, line-ups bolstered and diminished. Much of the music draws inspiration from American folk and roots, with many of the musicians citing as influences the likes of Blind Willie Johnson, The Memphis Jug Band, Doc Boggs, Robbie Basho, John Fahey and Sandy Bull, as well as fringe British artists like The Incredible String Band, Roy Harper, Simon Finn and Wizz Jones. But improvisation and the application of the drone open up these new folk musicians to the roar of the cosmos. In the process, they have slipped improvisation of its jazz-inspired reputation as a cerebral discipline and redefined it as the original, primal musical gesture, reminding us that it was always folk music's most natural mode of expression.

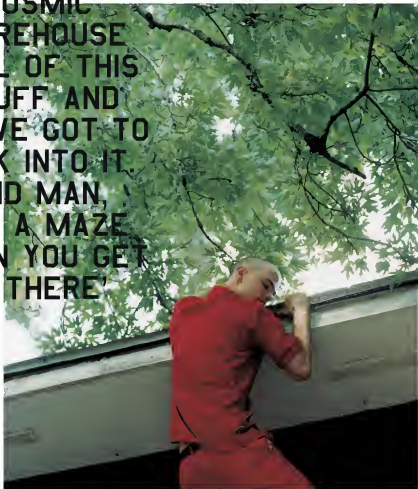
At Brattleboro, guitarists like Glenn Jones (of Boston's Out De Sac) Jack Rose (of the improving ensemble Pelt) and Willie "Gutbucket" Lane took the protein forms of Basho, Fahey and Johnson, and walked them deep into virgin territory, with an attack that was rock-informed and an approach to structure that was hypnotic, non-linear and supremely delicate. "In Pelt we made connections between Indian music, old time and blues very early on," Jack Rose confirms. "Plus, hearing a tape of [minimalist composer] Henry Ford in 1957 showed us it was possible to put those pieces of music into practice." Elsewhere, the Son Of Earth-Fish On Bone too utilised an old Darsenne, wired cymbals, contact mics and the crackle of cheap amplification to activate a low level drone that sounded like an orchestra of cranked '78s whose grooves had worn right through. Joshua Burkett's entrancing backwoods songs were made flesh by guests from the Sunburned camp, while guitarist and vocalist Dredd Foulke - "the history of free folk in Brattleboro", according to Chris Corsano's introduction - took the free associative sound poetry of Stasaraferia Tim Buckley to structural new levels, with the aid of his shadow Ed Vargian on violin. But more than anyone, Matthew Valentine and Enka Elder best caught the spirit of the event, both as the MV & E Medicine Show and as the central axis of the freeform Tower Recordings collective. Indeed it was Valentine, alongside his buddy Ron Schneiderman of Spirit Of Orr Records, who put the fest together.

"For me the Free Folk Fest was all about free thinking folk," Valentine declares. "We're sitting at a table on the third floor porch of his 'sky house', hidden away in the middle of the woods just south of Brattleboro and halfway up a dirt track known as the East Mountain Road. We're eye-level with the tops of the trees, the local beer is good and our conversation is punctuated by the occasional drifting of woodpeckers. "There were all these people who needed to be brought together," he continues. "There are so many similar elements that are running through their art, even though on the surface players like, say, Paul Flaherty and Jack Rose seem very different. Yet they're coming at music from the exact same place. Everyone on the bill is into freedom on a social level, a spiritual level - and especially - on a musical level. It was great to see all these people coming together, people who I think of as being part of, for lack of a better term, the subunderground, this periphery that's known in certain circles but aren't seen as being linked to any particular music. It was also intended as a nod to the progenitors of this whole scene, inviting people who are still at it, like Flaherty, who has been releasing his own records to little acclaim since the 70s, and [gonzo folk artist] Michael Hurley, who has been gone, I think, since about 1965. They're both still doing the same thing they were doing back then and that's what I think the free folk ethos is, people who have just stuck to their laurels, producing the same kind of cerebral, indie-style music, free of the confines of popularity, senses or movements, and concentrating on focusing on their own art and voice and dedicating themselves to that. To me, everyone who performed is a scholar of the form and it was nice to have them all in the one room."

Although he's originally from upstate New York, Valentine moved down to Manhattan in 1994, where he put together the Beefheart/Pussy Gargoyle-inspired unit Memphis Lurene, with Pat Gussy (who has cut a

Previous page: Sunburned Hand Of The Man in Boston, June 2003 (John Moloney second from right). Right: Gutbucket. Chris Corsano

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handful of bewitching psychedelic folk records under the pseudonym PG Sax and Marc Wolf aka Spanish Workman. "We were full-on electric and I really wanted to stick to acoustic sounds, so we became Tower Recordings," he explains. "Tower are based around free improvisation andraga music, where there's a lot less form and it's more about the sound itself and making sure the emotion of the environment is captured. We never play the same way twice. There are certain themes that we like to explore but in terms of where it's going to go or even a tonal centre, that's really dependent on the weather and star signs. It just seemed ridiculous to play things the same way." Valentine likens Tower's musical approach to channelling, insisting that when they play live it often feels as if they're simply drawing imminent forms straight from the air. "I think the music just exists, it's out there and you've got to find it," he asserts. "There's like a cosmic warehouse full of this stuff and you've got to jack into it. And, man, it's a maze when you get in there."

The first Tower Recordings album, 1995's *Rehearsals For Rowland*, was a good, if slightly generic, indie rock record, but with 1998's *Let The Cosmos Ring*—essentially a selection of solo cuts recorded under the name Planet TR—Tower really came into their own, with a haunting assemblage of delectable ballads, snake-charming instrumentals and Krautrock klang. Still, it was 2001's *Folk Scene* that fully established them as avatars of a new root-questing vibration. Drawing on a huge ensemble of players including Tim Barnes, Valentine's partner Erika Elder, Helen Bush, Pat Gutter and New Zealand sound artist Owen Roberts, *Folk Scene* is a lushly structured collage of beautiful song fragments whose logic consciously mirrors the aquatic twists and turns of the Incredible String Band's 1968 classic *The Hangman's Beautiful Daughter*. It remains one of the scene's founding documents.

"That Incredible String Band record is definitely a flux in their career," Valentine confirms. "And for me, *Folk Scene* is the fulcrum of our catalogue. I wanted to make something that was really obvious to people. I think there was a lot of myth and obliqueness surrounding Tower. So we made things a lot more obvious, starting with this. It was meant to be an apocryphal release, clearing out our own storehouse so we could fill it back up with other things. Our new disc, *The Futuristic Folk Of The Tower Recordings*, directly relates to it. If you look at them both together they're like sister lovers, whereas *Folk Scene* is sort of fragments, little miniatures in a maximal context. *The Futuristic Folk...* is the opposite: longer songs in a minimal setting."

Since moving to rural Vermont from the city a year ago, Valentine has increased the frequency of broadcasts via his own home-run label, Child Of Mercurius, documenting his solo experiments across a variety of traditional instrumentation. Given the logistics involved in getting the sprawling Tower live-up together in one place, Valentine has also launched the MV & EE Medicine Show, a duo with Erika Elder that models itself on the travelling minstrel revues of old. They played the opening night of the fest, the live-up expanded to include Tom Carter of Texas psych group Charlamides (a duo completed by the aforementioned Scores duo Christina Carter and Heather Leigh Murray) on electric guitar, while Tower Recordings reconvened for the second night, when the fest relocated to the Hampshire College Tavern over in

Amherst. There, Tower were joined by Dread Poole, providing some spooked wordless vocals. "When folks come up and join us, like Dread did at the fest, they're always on the same page," Valentine says. "We know they're OK and that they're going to find the same direction, you don't have to give them a map. It seems to me, especially living out in the country, you get in tune with the nature, the woods, and there's a certain sound. If you're not harmonious with nature then the music doesn't sound right out here. It has really helped my ears tune away from the city. You can hear the intervals between the notes a lot better, so if we're doing more Indian based music or blues stuff, they're very similar but the microtones and the inflection is where it's at, the delivery of it. It's funny, a different kind of chaotic music comes out of the woods than the city."

The Vermont area has a long history of radical chaos. It's still dotted with communes and "back to the land" outposts, entrenched here since the late 60s. The first night of the Folk Fest was originally scheduled at a communally run restaurant/coffee house/performance space called The Common Ground in Brattleboro, but at the last minute the place had its electricity cut. They're now fighting closure. A key 60s activist, Marty Jozet, now contributes a radical weekly column to *The Brattleboro Reformer*, where Erika Elder also works. In *Total Loss Farm: A Year In The Life*, journalist Ray Mungo recalled his experiments in communal living, comparing the Vermont area with that other countercultural lightning rod, California. "Vermont is a place of strong white magic, a place friendly to adventures of the mind and body," he wrote, contrasting it with the black magic of California. "Vermont belongs to The Band," he insisted. "California to The Rolling Stones."

"When we first started playing, we felt we needed to learn a couple of tunes to please the bar crowd and fill up some time," draws John Moloney, casting his mind back to the earliest, notorious shows by his group Sunburned Hand Of The Man. "So we learned 'Sympathy For The Devil'. Fun stuff." Modelled more along the lines of a streetfighting gang than a hippy commune, Sunburned Hand Of The Man don't drink says. "There's a new hippy here in the cities of America," Moloney snorts to me. "I am not a tattooed vegan. In all fairness I've never met more paranoid and self-centred human assholes than the few vegans I've been unfortunate enough to come across in my life. No meat, no milk, no fish, no eggs, no cheese equals no soul. Fuck hippies. We don't adhere to any utopian concept or live by any manifestos, but it would be safe to say that we think like a load of disenchanted Americans who don't believe what the news or the government says, don't buy into mass consumerism and don't eat at McDonald's. There are a lot of these folks and they don't play music, much less psychedelic folk. Sunburned itself is a corrupting influence. Boston is a big city loaded with corrupting influences and we are very proud to walk among them."

Like Japan's Acid Mothers Temple Soul Collective, Sunburned operates almost as an extended family for all kinds of dropouts, punks, poets and pugilists, with the mothership berthing countless splinter groups like Enos Slaughter (who feature Sunburned guitarist Marc Orleans, David Shuford from The No-Neck Blues Band and Carter Thornton of ZITTITZ), Franklin's Mint and Healers Biorel. They've also had to put up with the same amount of abuse and suspicion from their neighbours as Kawabata and co., suffering everything from physical assaults to nails in their tyres. "I went to see Acid Mothers Temple on their first USA tour in

Erika Elder & Matt Valentine, aka Tower Recordings, at their 'fly house' in Brattleboro, Vermont



**"PRETENTIOUS  
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Boston and I was ready for a fuckin' indoor riot," Moloney says. "When they come on I got into it, moving around and such, and this guy comes up to me and says 'Hey man, I really appreciate what you're doing but could you please sit down?' I couldn't believe this down. I sat him in the chest and told him to go fuck his sister."

Sunburned crawler out of the debris of The Shit-Spangled Banner, whose sole release, 1996's *No Dub No DMX*, was part of Byron Coley and Thurston Moore's *Ass Rats* series, alongside their sister group The No Neck Blues Band, the Shit-Spangled Banner consisted of Moloney, Rich Pontius and Rob Thomas, who said Moloney on the idea that the trio would be a cross between The Melvins and Sonic Youth. They weren't. As their Boston loft space began to fill out with characters like keyboardist Conrad Capistran, percussionist and electronics wizard Chad Cooper and guitarist Marc Orleans, the jams got crazier and the parties got wilder. "But labels like 'jazz' and 'impro' don't fit our way of life," Moloney protests. "Somewhat those words make my ghetto bones go cold."

Moloney grew up out in the projects, in velvets housing in Everett, Massachusetts, about two miles from downtown Boston. "It was crazy," he remembers. "There was a lot of fighting going on and most of it was actually encouraged or not taken seriously by the parents at all. Most of the parents were in their early twenties anyway. There was a lot of open drinking and drugs in the neighbourhood as well, so we were used to seeing these things from an early age. There was also a lot of crazy shit going on all the time, we'd see loads of fistfights and savage beatings. Like most of the kids, I was into Star Wars, GI Joe, Star Trek, video games and the popular things of the times. But what separated the kids in our neighbourhood from all the non-projects kids was our special talent for mischief and destruction. We got into explosives pretty early. My forte was the pipebomb. It was good at it, really good. We'd make some bombs that were fuckin' powerful. We'd blow up anything: mailboxes, abandoned cars, trash. We even took down a 30 foot tall tree one time. We lived on the top of a very steep hill, and right across the street there was a big park with a huge hill and set of stairs to get to the bottom. From an early age we would roll anything round down the hills into the main streets. Tyres, tyres on fire, ghost rider bicycles, shopping carts. It was a long hill, and to roll a tyre and have it go straight onto Broadway into traffic was the prize, because from the top you couldn't see what cars were coming. We would laugh so hard we would piss our pants when we heard the tyres screech and cars crashing into each other. We caused a couple of big accidents. One tyre we rolled had the rim still attached and air still in it, so it got this killer bounce to it and it really kicked up speed. This poor bastard happened to be walking and got nailed by this round monster. He was carrying a big full of beers that broke all over the ground when he was knocked out. I've never laughed so hard in my life and I still cry laughing when I think about it. We were bastards. Great fun. I miss it."

In high school Moloney soon graduated to the hard stuff and he was arrested at 17 for stealing a car just so he could burn it for the insurance money. Between 17 and 21 he was arrested six times for everything from auto theft, drugs, booze, assault and battery with a dangerous weapon, and default warrants. While he was still at school in 1983, he joined his first

group, a breakdancing gang called The Ghetto Breakers. They would walk the streets packing a huge boombox that rattled with the top of the day, and each member of the crew had their own special move. Moloney's being the handsomest. "I could go for hours," he gloats. "Though when I try it now my bones feel like they're going to break. After high school ended in 1989, I started hanging out with different crowds. We were basically a weed cult that drove around in a van all day and settled down in a friend's basement to smoke bones, take acid and mesquite, and listen to The Grateful Dead." After four years in a small liberal arts college in western Massachusetts, Moloney returned to Boston and took a job in an Irish bar while drumming with hardcore and punk groups in his spare time, applying an advanced, idiosyncratic drum style that he had initiated by air drumming along to MTV.

"I still don't know how Sunburned happened," he claims. "I just know it feels like it was supposed to, like déjà vu. The line-up was so loose back then that we never considered ourselves a band. I still don't. We're a gang and a family in every sense of the word. The music was just an extension of us hanging out. We did as much timing as music back then, so we were born out of the idea of simply having some good laughs together." Selected highlights from their extensive visual archive are now on a video released on the Italian Qbico label. It's a fantastically revealing document, with surreal drug go's, mock arguments and prank setpieces, spliced with guerrilla theatre and some powerful live footage. Spanning their entire career, the footage includes early sound art pieces involving microphones used as lassos, and *Paganara Grateful Dead-type* Country Jam remastered by an orchestra with a post-free music model. They've also released a deck of home-burned live CDs and three limited edition LPs, assembled from years of performances and available directly from the group, or via distributors like Father Yod and Edipse. Early sides like *Mind Of A Brother* are more abstract than the group's current heavily rhythmic incarnation, defined by webs of deep, cold space plotted by constellations of electric guitar and orbited by sunbaked subbanna horns. On later sides like the classic *Jaybird*, reissued on LP by Qbico, they take great kinks towards sustained form with an approach to rhythm that's as tactile and relentless as a sledgehammer. There's a hallucinatory chorus broadcast beat sear through some desecrating levels of FX, buckets of locomotive percussion and distressed, swamp funk keyboards.

"To me, it's always been very organic, whether playing atmospheric drone pieces or some freaked out funk jams," says guitarist Rich Pontius. "We all just play. The only part that's deliberate is that we're all doing our own thing while trying to remain a part of the overall sound. Its not just 11 guys all wiggling out simultaneously and without paying any attention to each other. There was a mid-point that I found troubling, where we seemed to be reading water with the more atmospheric stuff while also occasionally busting out a more structured song, and it never seemed the two forms would coagulate. That has completely faded as an issue for me. We've been doing it for so long and play together so well, and for months now we seem to be having an extended period of really right-on sessions. Which is not to say that every time we strap it on we're making gold. There are still seasons of mediocrity, but it just doesn't matter because the next week, next day or even 30 minutes later we might plug in and melt all our minds." Pontius recalls Sunburned's semi-directed phase with some hilarity. "We used to constantly have these pre-gig huddles where we'd talk about structure very loosely," he laughs. "Like 'Let's keep things real mellow for a

while, you two guys start out alone and then eventually we'll build it up after 20 minutes", but then get on stage, toss the charts out the window and dance the Aborn boogie. Not maliciously or intentionally, it would just happen that way. For me, those huddles became endearingly comical after a while. When the music really takes off and you're playing with a bunch of guys all doing their own thing but unified and making it up as you go, it's the ultimate creative act to me. The space I'm in after finishing a set is like a heavy rush after really great sex. It's an amazing, liberating feeling."

"We just got on with it the only way we know how," Moloney insists. "And that's all we do. When we first started, I wasn't familiar with free jazz at all. I got some John Coltrane CDs when I was in college. The first one I got was *Sun Ship*. I loved it, the brand new sound to my ears. I got interested in jazz then. Around the same time Thurston Moore wrote up a list of free jazz essentials for The Beasties Boys' *Grand Royal* magazine and that led to deeper digging. I actually owe a lot to The Beasties Boys for opening some musical doors to me. They were also great live acts in 1983 when *Check Your Head* came out, switching styles on stage and playing instruments. A real inspiration."

"For me, it has become very spiritual," he continues, "whether we are playing coke rock or clanging bells while someone groans like a dozed goat. I try to look everyone in the eye before we play in front of people. There's always a loose plan that goes right out the window the second we plug in. Always. Like in *Battlebore*, the music just took control, the sounds, the power. I feel like we conjure up the sounds from the beyond or from next door. I honestly feel like we are some sort of channeling device or, at least, medium. Not some New Age bullshit but some sort of conscious coincidence. It's a real uplifting experience and we are proud to be the ones to make everyone smile and come out of themselves a little. I saw people dancing that I would swear never danced before. The ultimate goal is, for me, to get folks moving, to get folks involved and ultimately let everybody know that you can do it too. Pretentious asholes, arm folders, negative hoppers, they're everywhere and we're out to get them."

"I think someone should analyse the chromosomes of all the people in this group of musicians, all the people who played the Free Folk Fest, and see if they can't work out what the fuck is going on," bursts Heather Leigh Murray, bendaged and high, guzzling pints of coffee the morning after Scores' electrifying performance with Flaherty and Corsano. "It feels like being a part of some kind of very utopia. All the players have this amazing, alive approach to living and making art. I'm still trying to come to terms with it all, especially with what happened last night. I feel it's going to have huge repercussions in my life." Murray is married to the other man, and she's with her then partner Shawn McMillen in a duo known as Ash Castles On The Ghost Coast, who released one beautiful CD on Tom and Christina Carter's Wholly Other label. When Ash Castles ended, Murray joined Charalambos and formed the Scores duo with Carter, singing and playing organ, cuatro (a four stringed Venezuelan instrument) and, initially, guitar. Between them, Carter and Murray have pioneered a strong, instinctive approach to their respective instruments, combining the gospel blues of Blind Willie Johnson with repeating, snare-like patterns, echoes of the sanctified doctored phrase of Washington Phillips and the kind of loacering, untutored Jesus work that Lydia Lunch used on early Teenage Jesus tracks. In the process they've exploded the clichéd







Above: Ben Chasny, aka Six Organs Of Admittance and Corsets On Fire.  
Below: Christina Carter and Heather Leigh Murray, aka Scores

### 30 CHUNKS O' WEIRDNESS

**Black Twig Pickers** North Fork Flyer CD (WH)  
**Christina Carter** Striped Wing LP (Eclipse)  
**Teen Carter** Root King LP (Eclipse)  
**Charalambides** CH7 CD (Wholly Other)  
**Corsets On Fire** First Recordings From The Sun CD (Ba Da Bing!)  
**Cut De Sac** Don CD (Capella)  
**Death Of The Sun** CD (Strange Attraction)  
**Double Leopards** A Problem In Thousands Of Unwashed Revolutions LP (Eclipse)  
**Paul Fleeherty** Words CD (West Part)  
**Paul Fleeherty/Chris Corsano** The Hated Music CD (Ecstatic Yell)  
**Dredd Fools** In Quest Of Time CD (Forest Exposure)  
**The Why Of Five** CD (Ecstatic Yell)  
**Parasite Parasite** LP (Ecstatic Yell)  
**Jacobs O' Motherfucker** Change CD (Earth)  
**Joshua Gold** Cassan CD/LP (Posh One's Nest)  
**Heather Leigh Murray** Concha/Vocal Recordings July 2002 CD-II (HeatherLeighOnline)  
**The No-Hack Blues Band** Ever Busted! LP (Seven)  
**Sticks And Stones** W/ Break My Bones But Names Will Never Hurt Me CD (Soundstone/Reverant)  
**Pelt** Peltia From The Aker CD/LP (WH)  
**Jack Rose** Red Horse, White Male LP (Eclipse)  
**Scores** Wire Away La Bala LP (Eclipse)  
**Six Organs Of Admittance** Dark Nocturnal CD (Holy Mountain)  
**Over & Chorus** CD (Holy Mountain)  
**Son Of Earth-Flesh On Bone/Double Leopards** oh LP (Apotony)  
**Scorched Hand Of The Men** Joyland CD RLP (Mushland/Cbox)  
**The Tickle Down Theory Of Lord Knows What LP** (Eclipse)  
**The Tower Recordings** Folk Scene LP/CD (Skat Field Recordings/Commotion)  
**The Fabulous Folk Of The Tower Recordings** CD (Child Of Morpheus)  
**Matthew Valentine** I Busted One w/God CD R (Child Of Morpheus)  
**The MY & EE Medicine Show** 'Tonight' One Night Only! MY & EE in Heaven LP (Time-Lag)

### RESOURCES

**Apotasy Recordings** apotasy@prod.com/mssn.html  
**Child Of Microtones** lunamv@holmla.com  
**Eclipse** www.eclipse-records.com  
**Father Yod/Ecstatic Yell** www.yod.com  
**Fuzztree** fuzztree@planet11.com  
**Obiko** qbz@planet11.com  
**Seven** bts@planet11.com  
**Seven** www.sevenrecords.com  
**Soundstone** soundstone@juno.com  
**Spirit Of Orr** www.spiritoforr.com  
**Strange Attraction** www.strange-attractions.com  
**Scorched Hand Of The Men/Meshead** pmt@scorchedhand.com  
**Time-Lag** www.time-lagrecords.com  
**WH** www.whrecords.com  
**Wholly Other** www.wholly-other.com



THE PRIMER:

# FELA KUTI

A bi-monthly guide to the core recordings of a particular artist or genre.

This month: Peter Shapiro takes a bush taxi to the independent republic of Kalakuta, the autonomous zone carved out in Lagos by Nigerian bandleader and scourge Fela Kuti to work up his masterpieces of dense, multilayered African funk. Illustration: Savage Pencil



**The potential for reinventing the self** (whether by myth, charisma or sheer force of metaphor) is popular music's biggest draw, its most powerful myth, its greatest (and thickest) subject. This is just as true (if not more so) of the pop music of Latin America, the Caribbean, Asia, non-Anglophone Europe, the Middle East and Africa as it is of Sly Stone, John Fahey, Doug Boggs, Madonna, Marilyn Manson or the most hands in the air 'Trance anthem' in cultures where plain utterances have incantatory power, where performance is the gateway to the spirit world, where children aren't considered alive until they have been properly named, this playing with identity takes on added significance. The 'World Music' community has, however, done its best to obscure this fact in a nostalgic fog of 'cultural purity' and 'native charm'. Well, the one word that even the most pith-helmeted of World Music tournaists – and perhaps even the man himself – has never tried to apply to Fela Kuti is 'charm'. Like just about all of music's greatest and biggest stars, Fela was an unrepentant asshole: a towering presence, to be sure, but with a skyscraper ago to match. Music transformed the shy, square Fela Ransome-Kuti who was afraid of both women and drugs into a swaggering rock star extraordinaire who made Jim Morrison and Mick Jagger look like quivering Polindres in the corner of the classroom.

Of course, all of this is not to say that Fela has reached unprecedented name recognition for an African musician because he bucked the trends of World Music marketability. The sad fact is that, more than his music, Fela himself makes for the kind of pitch that magazine editors salivate over: a guy with 27 wives who wears nothing but underpants and smokes pot the size of your forearm sets up his own neo-university and does everything he can to antagonise a military government sitting on one of the world's largest of reserves is a story that not even *Country Living* could turn down (it was told at length in *The Wire* 169). The problem (at least for sceptics, scholars and critics) this sets up is that, like no performer with the possible exception of Eminem, it is practically impossible to separate the man from the music and the myth. For fans, though, this is the very reason he is the thinking man's Bob Marley – Anansi (the trickster spider of Ashanti folklore), Superfly, Sun Ra, Kwame Ninsin and Bruce Lee wrapped up in one viciously, unwholesome Third World hero package: a larger than life figure that couldn't possibly be contained by one name, or even one life.

"I was born twice, man!" he told journalist Carlos Moore in 1982. "The first time I was born was in 1935... [My] father asked this German missionary to... name me... You know what that motherfucker named me? Hidedgetu... I felt that name like a wound... Bear the name of the conquerors? Or reject this first arrival in the world?... Two weeks after my first birth, my soul left my body for the world of spirits. When I say I was reborn, I mean I was reborn."

The second coming came on 15 October 1938 in Abeokuta, Nigeria, a town set up in the 18th century as a home for freed slaves (and the home of author Wole Soyinka), when Olufela Oludotun Olusegun Ransome-Kuti was born to Reverend Canon Israel Oludotun and Fumilayo Ransome-Kuti. The young Fela was severely disciplined by his father, a minister and grammar school principal. "What I liked about my father is that he looked everybody's ass," Fela told Carlos Moore. "One day, he even kicked a white man's ass." A British school inspector had come to inspect his father's school, but the school was built by Nigerians, not by the British government and Reverend Ransome-Kuti refused to allow him to inspect the school. When the inspector insisted,

Fela's father grabbed his cane and started to flog the inspector. "Oh man, I dug him for that!" Fela said. He dug it so much that the scene was re-enacted to great comic effect in Fela's rarely seen cinematic autobiography, *The Black President*.

Fela's nascent political consciousness was further reinforced by his freeland mother. Fumilayo founded the Nigerian Women's Union, perhaps the first feminist organisation in Africa, in the early 1940s, and was apparently the first woman to drive a car in Nigeria. Her campaigns for universal suffrage, Nigerian nationalism and socialist causes attracted such attention that she travelled to both the USSR and China, where she met Mao Zedong.

By the time he was a teenager, Fela's path was clear. His twin loves were rebellion (in high school he formed a club called the Planless Society – "Disobedience was our law") and highlife, the syncretic music that emerged in coastal Ghana in the 1920s as a fusion of indigenous rhythms, palm wine guitar styles, Western military marches, church hymns and sea shanties. The urban elite in Ghana's coastal cities gave their patronage to brass bands, while in rural villages highlife was played by guitarised groups. By the mid-40s elements of swing and calypso had also been incorporated, and in the hands of E.T. Mensah & The Tempos, highlife became the dominant popular music in Anglophone West Africa. It was Mensah who brought highlife to Nigeria when he toured there in the early 50s. More important for the future direction of Fela's music, though, was E.K. Nyame, who was credited with popularising the guitar group strain of highlife by combining it with elements of comic theatre and composing songs in Twi rather than the English of the elites. His type of highlife group became known as the 'concert party'. In the post-war years, the concert parties effectively functioned as grots in a rapidly modernising Ghana by touring constantly, bringing music and news to isolated rural areas.

Perhaps more than anything else, it is this singular combination of political commitment and sense of theatre that gives Fela such iconic status. Last month, an exhibition of art inspired by Fela opened at New York's New Museum of Contemporary Art and with it a new book of essays on his life and music. There are a further three books on Fela due out in the next year. Masters At Work, Common, Monsterr Mike, Sade and Afro Bangers have all recorded tributes to Fela over the last couple of years (if Rodgers's amazing workout on "Zombie" from the *Red Hot & Riot* tribute album isn't enough, damn Fela for you, re-mortgage your house to get a copy of Ephraim McKenzie's amazing and preposterous *Afrobeat Special: Brother To Brother: Ephraim Sings Fela!*, while groups like Antibalas and The Diktators have based their careers on his blueprint. Of course, when that blueprint is probably the most successful attempt to navigate the mind/body divide, to unite the power of the word with the power of the drum, to use the transformative power of music to uplift, you're bound to have followers.

## KOOLA LOBITOS/THE 69 LA SESSIONS WARSWE WRA55454 CD MID LATE 1960s/early 1970s

Fela's career in music started in 1954 when his friend Jimi Kombi Braham introduced him to highlife musician Victor Olajide. Since Fela was still living in Abeokuta and Olajide was based in Lagos, Fela joined Olajide's Cool Cats as a part-time singer. The following year, however, Fela's father died of prostate cancer and Fela took a government job to help support the family. In 1958, he persuaded his mother to send him to London where he attended Trinity College of Music and studied the trumpet. In London Fela formed his first group, Koola Lobitos, with Braham, who had also travelled to London, and expatriate West Indians,

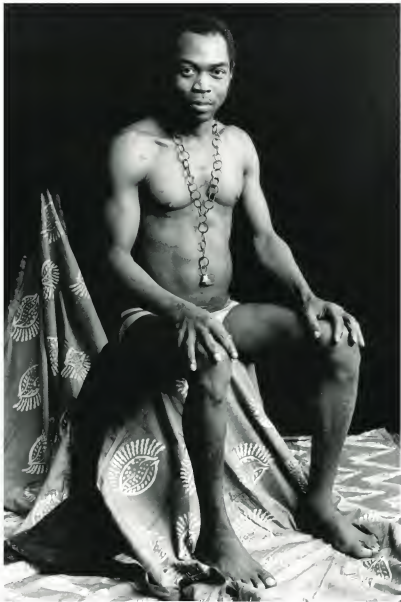
playing mostly fairly straightforward jazz. (Carlos Moore's *Fela*, this *Blitz Of A Life* claims the group's name was formed from two nonsense words, but others say it means 'Cool Cats'.)

Upon returning to Nigeria in 1963, Fela's mother persuaded him, rather ironically, to be interviewed for the position of Director of Music in the Nigerian army. He ended up working instead for Nigeria Broadcasting, but soon quit that job to form a new Koola Lobitos in 1964. Later that year, Fela met Tony Allen, the drummer for The Western Toppers, and the following year asked him to drum for Koola Lobitos. Using Allen's prodigious skills at the kit (particularly the way he could blend, reinforce, echo and play off the conga and shikere percussion patterns), Koola Lobitos set out to create 'highlife-jazz', a deeper, more complex, more intricate music than either the lifting, more calypso oriented highlife of the time or the endearingly hyper versions of rock and soul that swept Lagos in the wake of Sierra Leonean Afro-rock singer Gerardo Pina's arrival in town in 1966. (Despite Fela's rejection of Afro-rock, the group backed Chubby Checker and Miro when they toured Nigeria. And those interested in hearing the kind of highlife and Afro-rock that Fela was competing and reacting against in the 60s are urged to seek out two wonderful albums released in the 80s by John Simon Roberts's sadly defunct Original Music label, *Angels And Archbishops: The Sixties Sound Of Lagos Highlife And Money Be No Sand*.)

Koola Lobitos featured future Africa 70 regulars like Allen, trumpeter Turdo Williams, saxophonists Lekan Annmahau and Christopher Uwaror, and of the group's singles collected on *Koola Lobitos/The 69 LA Sessions*, the roots of Fela's signature sound can be heard most clearly on "Diskidee 101". Its baseline is much heavier than the easy, pan-African swing that characterised the highlife around at the time, and the groove is fortifyingly deep and hypnotic. Fela's trumpet solo, though, has yet to throw off the shackles of jazz. Elsewhere, "Highlife Time", with Fela's ludicrously breathless vocals and its relentlessly upbeat, 'dance craze' arrangement, conjures the absurd image of Fela doing the Swim on a beach with Annette Funicello and Frankie Avalon; and "Lase Lase" and "Wayo" both have a 'Booty Call' feeling despite the Mungus BP Band's lead.

In 1969, at the height of the Biafran War (although he was a Yoruba, Fela sided with the Ibos who tried to set up the Biafran Republic in the eastern half of Nigeria), Fela took his group to America. The 'tour' was a disaster, and the group ended up in Los Angeles with no money, no gigs and no visas. Eventually, Fela and his renamed Nigeria 70 scored up a couple of nightclub jobs, and he was introduced to Sarah Smith (later Isadore), an anthropology student and Black Panther. Smith turned Fela on to *The Autobiography Of Malcolm X* and Eldridge Cleaver, and Fela started to become more interested in his African roots, discovering that his own ancestors that could have only been born outside of Africa.

It was in LA that Fela wrote what he considered to be his 'first African song', "My Lady Frustration". He told Carlos Moore that the main rhythm was based on something he remembered from London based Ghanaian musician Amos Campbell, while others have claimed it was a rhythm from sakara, a heavily percussive genre that is almost exclusively made, and listened to, by Yoruba Muslims. While this may very well mark the birth of Afrobeat (this was clearly something other than either highlife or jazz), the stamp of American funk was all over this record. I don't care what Tony Allen claims about the influence or otherwise of the Godfather of Soul on Fela's music, if that guitar riff isn't based 100 per cent on James



Fela Anikulapo Kuti in Paris, 1966

Brown, I'll eat the roaches from 100 of Fela's joints.

Despite its three minute duration, "Obé" might be a better starting point for Fela's re-Africanisation of the funk. This is the first time that his group manage the impossible feat of creating music that is as dense, layered and chaotically packed as an overcrowded bush taxi yet is somehow simultaneously as wide and push as the backseat of a stretch Lexus. "Wayo" is similarly deep, but with a more pronounced jazz leaning, and introduces what would become Fela's vocal trademark – his declaratory, drill sergeant singing style. "Ako" and "Mitschrafi" though, still sound like Blue Note hard bop with Tony Allen and an octopus on congas sitting in for Art Blakey – not that that's a bad thing of course.

## AFRODISIAC/OPEN & CLOSE

BARCLAYMCA 449450 CD 1979/1991

Sometime in 1970, Fela set in Lagos now, renamed his group Afro-70 and started hosting Sunday afternoon concerts at his club, the Afro-Spot, where trays of dirt cheap Nigerian homegrown circulated amongst the audience. The Afro-Spot quickly became so popular that Bootsy Collins, Nile Anderson, Jilli Starks and Bobby Day of The JB's visited the club during James Brown's 1970 tour of West Africa. "Even before I got into James Brown's band, the James Brown band was number one." Bootsy Collins told journalist Jay Ballouco. "But once I got there and saw Fela and them, I had second thoughts about it." Tony Allen claims that drummer Starks sat near him as he played, paper and pen in hand, attempting to chart his foot patterns.

The music that had The JB's trying to get on the good foot was probably something very similar to "Jeun Ko'Ku" (Chop and Quench) ("Eat and Drink" or "Gladton") which became Fela's first hit in 1971 when it sold 200,000 copies. The reissued version that appeared on 1973's Afrodisiac album reveals "Jeun Ko'Ku" as probably the first fully realised exploration of Fela's vision. While it's punchier than what would become the norm, "Jeun Ko'Ku" was a trance-funk epic built around a Tontro groove generated by Tony Allen that swirled so much it resembled one of those hypnosis spiral effects from a 1950s B movie. While the music itself is as "cosmic" as it gets, the singing lyrics about a gulton spitting upon everyone in the sight were as "here and now" as you could possibly get and were clearly directed at the regime of Lieutenant Colonel Yakubu Gowon which only saw the Biafran War as an excuse to further exert its power. On the same album, "Aligun-Jon-Ki-Jon", originally a 1972 single, was based on a Yoruba folk tale explaining why the tortoise hides in its shell and was a more cryptic, and more musically sedate, attack on political patronage and cynicism.

"Je'n Wi Teri (Don't Gie Me)", meanwhile, has the best percussion of any Fela record (and that's saying a lot for a group that distinguished between the lead and two "rhythm" conga players – icicles sliding down the rain forest at around three or four inches per minute mark, sending a refreshing chill down your spine for that. "Eko Ile", meanwhile, is Fela at his most stident, with a choppy rhythm and blasting horns that leap out of the speakers.

Like many of the albums discussed here, Afrodisiac has been reissued as part of Barclay/MCA/Wassie/Universal's excellent reissue programme which includes two six LP box sets and a series of two-one CDs. On the CD reissue, Afrodisiac is teamed with Africa 70's third album (Fela's Lagos is London Scene and Me Not), 1971's Open & Close. The track was ostensibly Fela's last at a dance case (Allen is an absolute manic at the keyboard, but sounds more like the first flowering of his legendary lasciviousness. The rest of the album, "Sweetie And Pake" and

"Gbagbo Gbagbo Gbagbo Gbagbo", combines the military horn fanfares from old school highlife with grooves so laid back and blunted they sound like James Brown coming down from a PCP high.

## ROFOROFO FIGHT/THE FELA SINGLES

WASSIE WRAS5956 CD 1972

### SHAKARA

BARCLAY 447077 NIGERIA 9268 CD/LP 1973

Along with his appearance on longtime ally Ginger Baker's 1972 Stratosmuous album, Roforofo Fight and Shakara are the two albums responsible for bringing Fela to the attention of an international audience. They were both released in the US in 1974 on the legendary Editions Mafusa label (which also issued records by Lafayette Afro-Rock Band and Matata) and became major records at clubs like The Loft, Paradise Garage and the Roxy. The dark drum workouts and extreme pattern repetition of Fela's records made them perfect for disco's marathon trance sessions, and their ferocious rhythms interlocked with the heavily percussive nature of much early disco. (The Afro 70 would address their relationship to disco on "Afro Disco Beat" from Tony Allen's 1977 solo album, *Megafono*.)

Despite its cover (an African version of Electric Ladyland) with topless women forming the shape of Africa, a "7" and a "0", with Fela sitting in the centre of the "0", lying back on his elbows, thrusting his groin up your face) and half the material which mirrors it, Shakara is perhaps the best, certainly most consistent album in Fela's prodigious catalogue of some 77 albums. The lyrics of "Lady" are Fela at his pigheaded worst – an attack on the "hypocritical" brand of feminism practised by Westernised African women that mocks them for claiming to be as powerful as men but still wanting men to hold the door for them – but that groove, particularly the languorous main guitar riff, could redeem anything and does. "Shakara (Olojo)" is that strange combination of menacing, "wee drums along the Niger, slow glowing intensity and 'get up off your ass and jam' propulsion that only the Afro 70 have ever mastered.

"Roforofo Fight" is Fela at his most engaging, scattling and mumbling and humming like Louis Armstrong possessed with the spirit of Clarence "Frogman" Henry. Africa 70 sound like a mob watching the fight Fela is taking about an intense groove of hissing shakers, chattering congas and brightly coiled guitars. Then, there's the definitive Fela keyboard solo and perhaps the best (certainly most in tune) horn playing on any of his records – the tenor solo, as on all the pre-1973 records, is by Igbo Chiro. With its nagging, dragging, endlessly repetitive beat, choked and constricted guitar riffs and honking horns, "Go Slow", about the horrendous traffic in Lagos, is more socialist realism – all that's missing is the intimidation factor from wandering bandits and rogue soldiers trying get some "dancer" from stranded motorists. "Question Jam Answer" is pro forma JB funk trapped in a marijuana haze, but no worse for that, while "Too Sleep Yanga Wake Am" is essentially a Fela ballad, a lugubrious half-striker that threatens to run what otherwise is a true classic. The two singles added to the CD reissue are 1972's "Shenshema", a dubby track featuring wild keyboards and what sounds like the Wivesfield chapter of the Women's Institute playing teacups in the background, and 1973's "Ariya", a monstrous, lurching, "boogaloo wading through quicksand" record that would be revisited numerous times by Fela and Tony Allen.

## GENTLEMAN/CONFUSION

WASSIE WRAS5958 CD 1979/1974

In many ways, Gentleman marks the turning point in Fela's career. By this time he had moved, with his

entire entourage of around 100 people, into a two-floor house on Agge Motor Road in the Surulere district of Lagos. The entourage included the female singers and dancers featured on the cover of Shakara who were also Fela's lovers. He called them his "queens". He also renamed the Afro-Spot, which was now known as the Shrine, and started to smoke marijuana in quantities that would blind the entire population of a small island nation. "Igba (the Shit)" from Gentleman is an ode to the kind but their fragments and twists and turns at all sorts of weird angles and suggests that Fela was on Mexican jumping beans rather than grass when he wrote it.

Gentleman, whose cover features a photograph of an ape wearing a three-piece suit, also marks the beginning of Fela's use of provocative sleeve art as an adjunct to his left wing riot theatricality and to further bait the Nigerian authorities. For the next few years, many of his covers were designed by artist Gbafowole Lewis and depicted Fela's lyrics in a sardonic, satirical fashion somewhere between Pedro Bell's cartoons for the *Parisian* and Clementine and the popular narrative paintings of African artists like Chien Santos and Tadeuwa Kanda-Matulu.

In early 1973 tenor player Igbo Chiro left Africa 70 and Fela decided that he would learn how to play the instrument and replace him himself. For music fans, this was his most contentious move in a career of contentious moves. Fela's "unique" sax style can be heard at the beginning of "Gentleman" where the Steve Wondery keyboard intro where his approach to harmony and syntax is like a feminist ink mauler bent on overturning narrative. Nevertheless, with charming funk and Fiddly lyrics like "I no be gentleman at all/African/No, like I am a/No know what to wear but my friend don't know/After put him socks/After put him shoes/Him put him pants/Him put him singlet... Him come cover all with him hat/Him be gentleman/Him go sweat all over/Him go faint/Him go down/Him go small like shit", "Gentleman" reinforced Fela's status as champion of the poor and as a political firebrand.

With his commune, uncommon cosmology and dedication to extended trance jams, Fela has been frequently likened to an African Sun Ra (Fela apparently once referred to Sun Ra as his "grandfather") and the two shared the same stage at an African American arts festival in Hattoush, Brooklyn in 1970, and Confusion, a single track album from 1975, is where the analogy takes hold musically. The abstract and spacially opening five minutes and Franco Abdu's Buster Williams-like bassline suggest many a night was spent at the commune with Fela's favoured Indian hemp, stung at the stars and listening to Herbie Hancock's Sextant. The bridge between the "cosmic" beginning and the full-on Afrobeat section is pretty much the pinnacle of Afro-futurism, especially when Allen's drums really kick in around the 6:40 mark. Lyrically, too, "Confusion" is a masterpiece, with Fela using the Lagos traffic (and the three dialects he uses in the song) as a metaphor for the mess Nigeria was in.

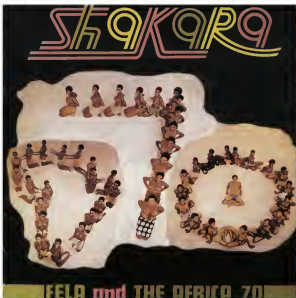
## EXPENSIVE SHIT

EDITIONS MAFUSA 442435 LP 1975

While many alternative communities have seen excess and debauchery as a way to challenge societal norms, Fela and his commune did more than just epater les bourgeois. He helped organize a pan-Africanist think tank with leading left wing Nigerian intellectuals, formed a youth organisation, the Young African Pioneers, and bought a printing press in order to publish anti-establishment pamphlets. On 30 April 1974, the police raided the commune and arrested Fela for possession of marijuana. When he was released from prison two weeks later, Fela directed a barbed wire



FELA RANSOME-KUTI & THE AFRICA 70



Clockwise from top left: Artwork for Gentleman (1973), Ransome-Kuti (1972), Afrodisiac (1973), Open & Close (1971), Confusion (1974) and Shakara (1972)





fence around the compound, declared it independent from Nigeria and named it the *Kalukuta Republic* ('kalukuta' means 'rascals' in Yoruba).

The police returned in the summer and attempted to plant evidence (more marijuana) on Fela. Fela asked to see the evidence and when the cops showed it to him, he ate it, right in front of them. Remanded to prison again, the authorities demanded to see the evidence in his faeces, but his fellow inmates rallied round and Fela presented their untainted shit to the police for analysis. With no evidence, Fela was soon released and promptly recorded *Expensive Shit* to further lampoon the government.

The title track begins with an urgent rhythmic guitar riff from Lekan Benson and a very Bob Marley-like horn chorus, making this rebel music of the highest order. The song comically comments on his incarceration and has one of the great choruses of all time: "Because why?/Because the shit day smell." Aside from this very personal indignity, excrement has an added resonance for Africans from former British colonies – the *cybinio* (white man) used to punish Africans by forcing them to spit dirt through the centres of towns (a theme Fela would return to in 1979's "ITT"). "Expensive Shit" is also one of the definitive Fela club tracks, particularly because of his keyboard solo that begins around nine minutes in – as much a hallmark of House's two-fingered style as James Brown's solo on the BBS in "Sex Machine". The album's other track, "We No Get Enemy", begins like the theme from *The God Couple*, and could very well be the Mike Post Orchestra except for James Aboyomi's slick playing.

## KALAKUTA SHOW

WALCUT WARRIOR/KALAKUTA 1993 CDLP 1075

### ZOMBIE

MCA 54565 CD 1995

On the morning of 23 November 1974 the police returned to Kalakuta, this time intent on busting skulls rather than making arrests or procuring evidence. Following the raid, Fela spent more than a week in hospital recovering. Undeterred, he returned to the studio in May 1975 to record *Kalakuta Show*, which would be the first release on his own Kalakuta label. Both the title track and Ghanawak Lemi's extraordinary cover painting directly addressed the police raid, but without the comedy of "Expensive Shit" or "Alagben Gben". It was his most direct record. Reminiscent of the bloody vide of Linnex Kwesi Johnson's *Creed Beat An' Blood*, "*Kalakuta Show*" is all the more devastating for its matter-of-factness, for the way the downbeat but mesmerising and single-minded groove draws you in and then drops the bomb on you. The album's other track, "Don't Make Guran Guran", is largely Fela by numbers but the keyboards, largely missing from "*Kalakuta Show*" except for a brief solo, make for a welcome respite from the damage.

The raid on the compound only served to embolden Fela. His poliostraff attacks pulled no punches and he started to name names. Towards the end of 1975, he even changed his own name, ditching the "Ransome", which he considered a slave name, in favour of "Anikulapo" (one who carries death in a pouch). His full name now meant: "He who emanates greatness, who has control over death and who cannot be killed by man". After recording "Zombie", Fela would have to call on the full force of his new name's occult powers.

"Zombie" is Fela's greatest record, a groovy so intense, so vibrant, so militant that it could rouse a whole army of the undead. Which is exactly what it did. Appended to Alien's most direct, yet funkiest, drumming, stirring horn charts and percolating guitar riffs, the song's unremitting mockery of the military regime and its foot soldiers bored deep into the Nigerian consciousness. Following its release, whenever Lagos's citizens saw a soldier on the street they would take on the mannerisms of a George Romero or Scooby Doo character – putting on a blank stare and marching with their arms outstretched in front of them. The message was reinforced by the more downtempo, more zombie-like "Mr Follow Follow", but all the damage was done by the title track. (The reissue comes with two extra tracks allegedly recorded at the 1978 Berlin Jazz Festival – "Mistake", which shows Fela's occasionally antagonistic, Miles Davis-like relationship with his audience, and "Observation Is No Crime", which was actually recorded in Lagos in 1977.)

Needless to say, the Nigerian government didn't take kindly to the perverse "dance croze" that Fela had started with "Zombie". On 18 February 1977, 1000 soldiers laid siege to Kalakuta with mortar fire. The soldiers beat, tortured or raped anyone and everyone that they could lay their hands on. Fela's 78 year old mother was thrown from a second floor window. Fela was again hospitalised (with fractures to his skull, arm and leg) and, inevitably, imprisoned.

## SORROW, TEARS & BLOOD

BARCLAY 54565/KALAKUTA 1993 CDLP 1077

### SUFFERING & SHMILING

WALCUT WARRIOR CD 1995

### COFFIN FOR HEAD OF STATE

KALAKUTA/KALUT LP 1981

As usual, Fela transmuted the government's brutality into devastating music. As with *Kalakuta Show*, *Sorrow, Tears & Blood*, the first record he made after the raiding of Kalakuta, positively dripped with blood (the cover photo shows Fela on stage with his broken leg still in plaster). The title track is the diametric opposite of "Zombie", but just as effective, with Africa 70 evoking the black and white images of Civil Rights marchers in the American South striding grimly and determinedly onwards despite being pelted with rocks and garbages and set on by attack dogs.

*Suffering & Shmiling*, meanwhile, was more of an exorcism. The intro to the title track is New York Garage five or six years before the fact, while the lyrics were Fela's revenge on the "turn the other cheek mentality" that the Christian missionaries had imposed on much of Africa: "Suffer suffer for your/Enjoy for heaven." The original issue of *Suffering & Shmiling* featured the stunning "Perambulator" on the flip which was later rereleased, along with "Frustration", in 1983. The track sounds like the blueprint for Arthur Russell's "Gang Bang" with Fela's psychedelically Phantoms of the Opera – organ slithering and sliding across hairy horns and an unforgiving percussion momentum. The lyrics, particularly the passage about haemorrhoids, urging doctors to use traditional African instead of Western, medicine, only make it more bizarre.

On 13 April 1978 Fela's mother died from complications arising from the injuries she suffered during the army raid. The following year, as Olusegun Obasanjo was preparing to hand over his government to a civilian regime, Fela brought a replica of his mother's coffin to Obasanjo's house. The event was commemorated by Coffin For Head Of State, another extraordinary polyrhythmic dirge. Again, Fela took the opportunity to mock religion, throwing Islam along with Christianity into the bargain this time.

## TONY ALLEN & THE AFRO MESSENGERS

### NO DISCRIMINATION

SHUT OUT 1980

## TONY ALLEN WITH AFROBEAT 2000 NEPA

EARLYWORKS 3025 CD 1994

Fed up with his lack of recognition, drummer Tony Allen left Africa 70 in 1979. His first album after leaving the rock was *No Discrimination*, which still had a heavy Africa 70 presence, including saxophonist Lekan Arinashoun who took over from Allen as Fela's bandleader. Nevertheless, the album is a strong step away from Fela's style. It features "Blow Your Head", style synth playing from someone called 'Collins' and is much sparser and dubby than anything Fela ever did. Despite, or maybe because of, the low-key arrangements, Allen shines, especially on "Love Is A Natural Thing" and the evergreen "Anyra".

After playing in Lagos with his group The Mighty Iroko, Allen left for Europe in 1983. He appeared on King Sunny Ade's second island album, then recorded NEPA for Earthworks in 1984. A sarcastic comment on the reality (or otherwise) of the Nigerian Electrical Power Authority, the title's intells stand for "Never Accept Power Always", fittingly, where other forms of African music got blasted out by close proximity to Western production values, Allen's brand of stripped down Afrobeat actually benefitted from the electro handpans and squiggly synth horns, particularly on the two "Dance Dubs".

## FELA KUTI UNDERGROUND SYSTEM

STERN 571045 CD 1995

After his mother died, Allen had left the group and his waxes (the 72 singers whom he married simultaneously at a ceremony during a concert in Benin City in 1978) started to leave him. Fela adopted an increasingly bizarre version of traditional spirituality. As he turned increasingly inwards, his music got more self-indulgent and it fell out of favour with the Nigerian public who preferred the more immediate thrills offered by juju and fuji. Under the influence of a spiritual vision, Fela renamed his group *Egito 80* for 1981's excellent *Original Sufferland*. Apart from both versions (Fela and Dennis Bovell's reissue) and *Blow Your Head*, the 1985's *Army Arrangement*, most of the *Egito 80* albums are lethargic, jazzy affairs of extended length, the dragging feel compounded by Fela's more literal, less fabulistic lyrics.

Strangely, despite his deteriorating health due to AIDS, Fela's last album was perhaps the best of the *Egito 80* records – the torpor was gone. *Underground System* was characterised by a manic energy: blistering guitar riffs, overly excited horns and superfast vocal choruses on the title track, and dissonant "Religious Monk on speed" piano lines, skidding and swirling in the Nigerian capital of "Pansa Pansa". The political charge was still there as well, with Fela lamenting the state of Africa with one lost desperate snarl at the former colonial powers and corrupt thieves now running the show.

It was a more fitting end than the Nigerian government would grant him. A few months before his death, he was arrested one final time, and paraded on TV in handcuffs, a frail, desperately ill man. Fela had refused all treatment for his illness except for traditional African medicine, and just before his death, he locked himself in his room and refused to eat. He died of heart failure on 2 August 1997, in Ibadan. President: The Art And Legacy Of Fela Anikulapo-Kuti runs at New York's New Museum of Contemporary Art until 28 September ([www.newmuseum.org](http://www.newmuseum.org))

Left hand comes: Steve arr for Kalakuta Show (1974), Sorrow Tears & Blood (1977), and Suffering And Shmiling (1978). Right hand: Fela and the Africa 70 on stage in Lagos, 1972 (top); Fela live in London, early 1980s.

# Charts

## Playlists from the outer limits

### 15 Records I Stole From My Father's Collection

**Dave Bazal**  
The Latin Touch Of Dave Bazal (Green)  
**Carl Sauer**  
Another Lonely Night (Hilltop)  
**Heavy Rhythm Park Campaign**  
Washed 'You, Watcher' Me (United Artists)  
**Marvin Gaye**  
Let's Get It On (Motown)  
**The Ink Spots**  
The Ink Spots (Vanguard Music Hall)  
**Kitty Katlin**  
Only Things Mean A Lot 3" (Decca)  
**Rod McKean & Anita Kerr**  
The Sea/The Sky/The Earth/How To The Sea (Stereo)  
(Warner Bros. Stereo Arts)  
**Sergio Mendes & Brasil '66**  
Greatest Hits (A&M)  
**The Ohio Seniors**  
Precision Radiation Instruments, Inc. Presents Hawaiian Holiday (Epic Tone)  
**Joe Ritter**  
Hillbilly Heaven (Capitol)  
**Uppin' Sam & Syreeta's Mitro**  
Songs Of India (Capitol)  
**Helen Stappell**  
Helen Stappell Sings Wagner Vol 1 7" box (RCA Victor)  
**Various**  
Blown In The Wind box set (RCA's Digital)  
**Various**  
Duke Placquette Presents Music From The Dancing Years (RCA Victor)  
**Various, hosted by James Earl Jones**  
Genesis On The Black Side Radio Series Soundtrack  
Plates L&S Dept of Health, Education & Welfare -  
(Social Security Administration)

### Monorail 15

**Collins**  
Everyone After World Answers (Leaf)  
**Drummond**  
Robustive Strides (Georgaphic)  
**Fennell**  
Said Soundings 1989-1990 (Touch)  
**Bill Wells Odet**  
Heavy Sense (Quasarsome Rock)  
**Wheaton**  
Double Helix On The Dime (GGI)  
**Almond Roberts**  
Carnival Science (Enough Trade)  
**Oliver Brown**  
The American (Aute)  
**Budde Gentry**  
An American Oath (Roses)  
**Snowy Sharrock**  
Black Women (4 Men With Beards)  
**James Carr**  
A Man Needs A Woman (Bent)  
**Felt**  
Stars On A Decade (Cherry Red)  
**Sergei Dnestrovsky**  
Anna ODT (Philly Faint)  
**Shellic**  
Pack Of Time (Keweenaw Kell)  
**Bulko Radio**  
Don't Fall Slowly Sleeping In The Night (Mojave)  
**Current 83**  
Soft Black Skin (Durtin)

Compiled by Monorail Music: 19 Kings Court, King Street, Glasgow G1 1RS [www.monorailmusic.com](http://www.monorailmusic.com)

### On The Beach 15 (Stories By The Sand And The Sea)

**Najma Hi To**  
"My, On The Beach" from On The Low Beach (Seagarden)  
**Seagen Oso**  
"Staying On The Beach All Day" from Come On Des Gossamer Vol 2 (Mordant)  
**Michael Houlihan**  
"Rings Beach" from Prowess Harsane (Triolet)  
**Michael Ryan**  
"The Beach" from The Piano Company (Piano)  
**Alog**  
"A Regular Heavens Is Found In The Sand On Some Beach" from Red Shift Song (Reno Gossamer)  
**Philip Colman & The Artistic Hastings Ensemble**  
"On The Beach" from On The Beach (Unlabeled)  
**Michael Huxford & Deery Jenger**  
"Beach House" from The Hanger OGT (Norse-Sandwich)  
**Stuart**  
"Beach" from Start (Sound Language)  
**Roberto Marcel and Giovanni Venosta**  
"Beach On The Beach" from Water Messages On Desert Sand (R&R)  
**No Names**  
"There Beaters CS" from Myths Of The New Future Part Three (Sawyer)  
**Yes' War**  
"Barbican On The Beach" from Darkness In Dreams (Orbital/Hammond)  
**Brian Biss**  
"Dawnish Beach, Autumn 1989" from Ambient 4: On Land (GGI)  
**Philip Glass**  
Ember On The Beach: Act 2, Scene 1: Dancer I from Embers On The Beach (Sing)  
**Bernard Herrmann**  
"The Beach" from Vertigo OGT (Warner-Sandwich)  
**Virgil Thomson**  
"At The Beach" from Early And As Reconsidered (New Albion)

Compiled by Peter Harjanto and Lamber Tustin (aka De Le-Fo), Imaginary Compilations, Athens, Greece [pharjanto@netnet.com](mailto:pharjanto@netnet.com)

### The Office Ambience

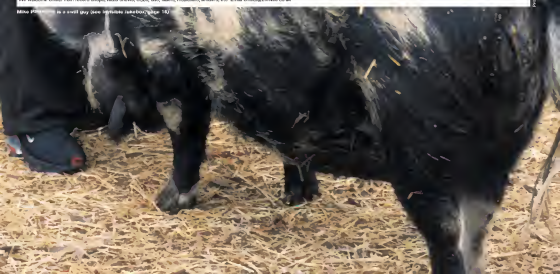
**Derek Bailey's Litterscale**  
Litterscale (Sound)  
**Anton Babalov**  
Remembrance (Dove (Chikling Music))  
**Sei**  
Unlabeled (Thill Jackson)  
**Deep Listening Band & Joe McPhee Quartet**  
The Unlabeled Band (Deep Listening)  
**Guido Marone**  
Kushin (Kushin)  
**Current 83**  
A Little Menstrual Night Music (Durtin/Hammond)  
**Various**  
New Deutsch (Giggle)  
**John Gale**  
Heterogeneous (FM)  
**Nurse With Wound**  
Chance Meeting Of A Delictive Tape Machine And Machine (United Durtin/Hammond)  
**Various**  
On MD Camp (GGI)  
**Carla Bazzich**  
Red Headed Stranger (George (George (GGI))  
**Fanning**  
Live In Japan (Hedge/Head)  
**Leifur Einarsson**  
The Houseband Spirit (Planet Mo)  
**Quantum**  
Said Rhythms (Tune)  
**Sach Urd Blues**  
Kind Kell (Sawyer)

Compiled by The Mini Sound System

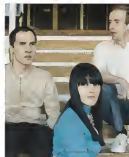
Compiled by Ben Thawtra  
[www.outerlimits.com](http://www.outerlimits.com) [www.sanet.com](http://www.sanet.com)

We welcome charts from record shops, radio shows, clubs, DJs, labels, musicians, readers, etc. Email [charts@thawtra.co.uk](mailto:charts@thawtra.co.uk)

Mini Photo is a cool guy (see [www.thawtra.co.uk](http://www.thawtra.co.uk) page 18)



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Faust

Berlin, Germany

Alvin Lucier

New York, USA

# Soundcheck

This month's selected CDs, vinyl and singles

**Ex-YMO members Haruomi Hosono and Yukihiro Takahashi are once again fusing cutting edge electronica and pop literacy in their new song project, Sketch Show. Clive Bell is seduced**

Happy ending: Sketch Show's Takahashi and Hosono

## SKETCH SHOW

TRONICA  
DASYWORLD CTGR015W CD

The slightly shocking news for followers of Haruomi Hosono, founder of Yellow Magic Orchestra, boss of electro-ambient label Dasyworld, and crimson gise of the Japanese underground, is that Harry 'The Crown' Hosono has made a pop record. Shocking but delightful, because the great tunesmith of Happy End and YMO has hardly dipped his hands into the frothy washing up bowl of pop since YMO disbanded at the height of their popularity in 1984. YMO were the dominant Japanese group of the 80s, second only to Kraftwerk as oddball pioneers of popular electronica. The other two members were Ryuichi Sakamoto, now multi-tasking as film composer, pianist and Brazilian music aficionado, and Hosono's current collaborator, Yukihiro Takahashi, originally drummer with art-rockers The Sadistic Mika Band. YMO should never have worked – it could easily have sounded like intellectuals slumming in pop, but succeeded because it embraced so wholeheartedly the world of the new machines, the new artificiality.

Reforming briefly in 1993, the YMO three have remained on good terms: Hosono says he was seduced back into songwriting by Takahashi; an invitation to Hosono to produce a solo album by Takahashi was seized upon by Japanese fans as evidence of fresh collaboration, whereupon the two then resolved to form a new group called Sketch Show. A sell-out tour of Japan last year has been followed by appearances this summer at Barcelona's Sonar and London's Cybersonica, which represent

Hosono's first touring outside Japan for 22 years.

Hosono and Takahashi have now produced a mini-album of four songs – each one a lovingly crafted item of sonic jewellery, enlarded with glittering glitches and digital diamonds. As with YMO 20-odd years ago, this is cutting edge electronica fused to pop literacy. Three of the four pieces have vocals, and the disc is fleshed out to 36 minutes with a trio of short Ambient landscapes, and two remixes by Keigo Oyamada, alias Cornelius. In his daring, large scale ambition, and his desire to operate at a weird tangent to the Japanese rock world, Cornelius has inherited the YMO mantle. The album also contains an animated video to the song "Chronograph", which challenges our sense of scale with images of splashing white liquid. We could be hovering above the colours of a seething white planet, or peering down into a glass of milk.

"Ebol", "Chronograph" and "Night Taker" are three songs with plenty in common. A digitally distressed acoustic guitar flickers across a loose-limbed rhythm, compiled from processed lip-smacking, slap and ticking noises. The sounds are delicate, but the rhythms are firmly rooted, prepared to stand on their own two feet. There's a Brazilian perfume in the air. Then the vocals are cunningly layered, male and female voices blended over several octaves into one disembodied vocal sound. The lyrics are a mixture of Japanese, English and Swedish, although as a Japanese woman's voice recites a list of Swedish words (names of dances?) on "Chronograph", we could just as well be listening to Chinese. Hosono claims that the Swedish words, being in a northern language, helped cool him down during the hot Tokyo summer when the song was recorded.

These sensuously pronounced lyrics also drip exoticism, like indispensable carvings on a jungle temple, and here Hosono returns to the manipulation of exotica which fuelled his great mid-70s solo albums: the likes of *Tropical Dandy*, which Hosono opened by crooning "Christinaga Choo Choo" in Portuguese.

"Ohotuka" is an instrumental, a soft arrangement of a simple melody, adorned with jittery samples of huffing and pping. The effect is laptop computers secretly gathering for a Morris dance on the digital village green. Cornelius adds electronic bagpipes to the folksy concoction, and then remixes the opening songs "Ebol" and "Chronograph". His remixes are true to the same spirit, but open out the songs to let in a broader, emptier space.

Even compared to Sketch Show's 2002 debut, *Audio Sponges*, Tronica represents a quantum move forward for Hosono. His way with musical technology is never less than interesting, but the collaboration with Takahashi has wrenched him away from the chilly, almost nihilistic noodling that he has occasionally fallen prey to. This is exquisite and sophisticated music, combining traditional instruments and electronics in a glassy but classy suspension. Sketch Show, their fingers on the pulse, have come up with the musical embodiment of the Japanese dream: that heady illusion of perfect harmony between human and synthetic. Tronica is a mingling, supremely light and very Japanese: misblending the saena cute yet narcotic dreamworld as a film like *All About Lily Chou-Chou*. "White Bears Sigh With Relief" is the mysterious claim on the record's spine wrapper, and amen to that. □



**ED ASKEW  
LITTLE EYES**  
IND 034 LP

BY EFFRON GOLEY

The self-titled ESP-Disk LP by Ed Askew is one of the great mysterious delights of the label's original releases. Released on CD as *Ask the Unicorn*, that 1968 album, with its cover photo of a man burning in a fish-ban under cover stars, has an odd and weirdly appealing delicacy.

The story goes that Askew was a Yale University-trained painter, energized by the fumes of revolt that hung so heavy in the air. Accompanied solely by his "tippie" (a ten-stringed instrument with a rather high and unusual range), he sang songs that fell somewhere between those of the earliest Pearls Before Swine, various British folk tunes, and even the more serious work of Tiny Tim. For many years it was thought that the first Tim album represented his solo recorded work. But time spent mining the depths of the New Haven underground folk scene unearthed evidence of a lost second LP. And here it is, presented in something like all its glory.

Very much an extension of its predecessor, *Little Eyes* is a work of stark, stark, stark, almost naked beauty. Askew almost always accompanies himself on guitar, with occasional harmonica and piano, his voice quivering against the force of society and all that they represent. My copy of the album is without song titles or notes of any type, yet there is a yearning and feeling of loss that unifies all ten tracks' dissonant lyrics. War planes fly into oblivion with cannons blasting; moonbeams refuse to shine; lovers disappear into the air, beds burn, fair falls. Even the love songs drip with a haunted melancholy you can almost taste. It's great stuff, and something that is sure to send the innocents of those who sit alone late at night. Once lost, now found, *Little Eyes* is a classic of destroyed hope.

**WILLIAM BASINSKI  
A RED SCORE IN LIFE**  
A RECORDS 3710 LP

BY JIM HANLEY

In the wake of his acclaimed *Disintegration* Loops, M/Cs William Basinski makes available more archival recordings of his strikingly beautiful Ambient constructions from the late 1970s and early 80s. The vinyl-only publication of *A Red Score in Life* features a solitary tape loop for piano and tape, originally composed in 1978. In place of the processed decay of *Disintegration* Loops, the cumulative dust from decades of neglect and the poor fidelity of Basinski's original playback equipment do the damage here, blurring the piano's tonal clarity. The muffled quality, heightened by a thick patina of sear, offers the strong impression that Basinski was sitting behind a Rhodes organ, not a piano. The loop emerges as a delicate lullaby for a sparse set of minor chords with one dramatically suspended note that marks the passage of another cycle in the loop.

Moodily yet unrepentable on first hearing, this set of notes grants benefits from the inherent repetitions of the loop, evolving over both sides of the record into a mesmerizing whirl of Basinski's self-proclaimed "research" that gives each moment time when *Disintegration* Loops referenced a melancholy lurking within the pastoral mythologies of America, *A Red Score in Life* is more of an elegiac recapitulation of the

psychological loneliness captured within such 70s jazz noir film scores as David Siegel's *The Conversation* and Lalo Schifano's scintillating *Thais* to Dirty Harry.

**BORBETOMAGUS  
SONGS OUR MOTHER  
TAUGHT US**  
AUGUST 1986

BY JULIAN COMLEY

For more than 20 years the Borbetomagus have been a relentless source of all moderate tastes in music. Noise has become a relatively standard route during that period, yet the blasting saxophones of Jim Sauter and Don Dietrich and Donald Miller's molten guitar jarr remain sources of outrage. You'll certainly find no signs of mellowing on Songs Our Mother Taught Us, recorded in Glasgow and London in April 1999. Tempered in live music, their instruments glow rather than bludgeon, performing a kind of psychic exorcism with a scurring mix of rock's sweet power and gothic outgrowths from Cobain and Aylea's barbed, growing edge.

As over the three players coalesce into a devastating unit from the off, inseparable components to the point where amplified horns and Miller's electric squal become at times indistinguishable. Always they appear to draw power from the same heavy duty dynamo. The 34 minute title track, framed by the more compact "Afterdark" and "After Afterdark," is a symphony of raw attack, caustic saxophones shriek and howl, democratically fused and rising guitar caught up in a frenzy of feedback and distortion. The amazing thing is that Sauter, Dietrich and Wilkerson in control of the maelstrom throughout; the energy may be corrosive but it's somehow harnessed and directed from within. At no point does it waver or degenerate into random noise. The three musicians have developed techniques that bring specificity to Borbetomagus music, and although there has been some evolution in that sound since the early days, it has remained consistent in character and instantly identifiable. Another Borbetomagus release: you may know what to expect, but that won't lessen its impact.

**BROADCAST  
HAHA SOUND**  
WARP WARP 06 CD/LP

BY JOHN MUGLEY

By now, we have a lot of ideas of the future to choose from. Broadcast, a trio from Birmingham into their second album proper, have been dogged by the near-future tag ever since their cautious emergence some time in the mid-90s. What, though, does retro-futurism usually suggest? A world of Basinski and valves, of 50s so fi and omnipresent rock modulators? A place where the wheel in space is an imminent reality and the waltz is cutting edge? A music that assumes the imagery of progress while actually denying it?

Such a job set of signifiers sells Broadcast rather short. Certainly, Tosh Kennen's vocals — a little whimsical, a little sear, often unimpressively pure — bring in another, more idealistic time. But *Haha Sound*, even more so than 2000's *The House Made By People*, juggles multiple doses of modernism with unusual grace and success.

The formula, as such, is reasonably straightforward: sink Kennen's melodies, which

verbosely suggest torch, nursery rhyme, 60s chanson and spy themes, into great fields of echo and break. The sound of *Haha Sound* is at once familiar and alien. Sometimes, they could be derided on multiple ends of electronics simultaneously from Louis and Beba Barron, through obvious kindred spirits like The United States of America and Elephant's Memory, right up to the avantgarde of Wu-Fu-Fu. In a word, it's a rhythmic sense that fits from industrial thump and wheeze to jazz falsetto, and it's clear Broadcast are in danger of producing something treacherously over-thought and overworked.

The thing is, it works beautifully. Occasionally, *Haha Sound* could do with a touch of the minimalism and space that punctuated their earlier records. But in the main, the excessive detailing is a marvel. The closing "Hawk" pits Kennen against a very kind Barry Baga hypersonic, mutant cyber and mechanical rhythms, and firm blocks of feedback serving as a baseline. "Kilene," meanwhile, reproduces a little Brits song and manoeuvring, rearing guitars and drones.

It's a pop record, really, but its awareness of history and possibility removes it for from our usual expectations of pop. The sound of science moving backwards and forwards with, at its heart, a socialist who humanises the experiment; still, yes, emotionally constant.

**CALIFONE  
DECLARATION TWO**  
PERIPHERAL PRESS CD

BY WIA CLARKE

Chicago group Califone's excellent *Quickstart/Overdubbed* album, released in April this year, came with a *QuickTime* movie written and narrated by Jonathan Tim Rutli and animated by film maker/musician Brent Green. Called *Francis*, its soundtrack opens *Declaration Two*, sequel to 2002's *Declaration One*.

The latter album was down from live performances for film loops by Jeff Eronesty and a 1933 puppet animation film by Ledaia Sauter. Compiling three soundtracks packaged in a limited edition accompanied a tape. *Declaration Two* is likewise mostly improvised the aforementioned *Francis*, which Rutli based on a dream where an elderly woman hearing the end of her life wants the leftover beans in her back garden into finishing her off, begins with a resonating solo on a pump organ before breaking into sporadic, dovetailing drum rhythms and saturated textures that capture the feeling of standing under beeping pylons. *Firework* (No Mail Days Are Sad Days) is the spontaneous soundtrack to Jeff Eronesty's short film involving a suitcase full of fireworks and archival footage of soldiers returning home from war. The performance is split into three sections, and built upon a thick layer of scoping feedback and suitably unpredictable bursts of fractured guitar. After seductively meandering through breaks soundscapes for the first two sections, the place peeks during the third, when a tiny drum pattern brings a sudden collapse to the composition and pulls it to a close. The final soundtrack, *Saltine*, is an account of King Herod's undidled tort for his 14 year old stepdaughter, the execution of John the Baptist. Appropriately dark from the offset, rhythms splinter, burst and fade across the shattered structure, which shimmers with lush energy and space.

**C&X  
BEING RIDDEN**  
THE TEMPORARY RESIDENCE THREE CD

BY KEN HOLLINGS

Slightly aging guy genius Ryan Kowdel saves the new wave. *Being Ridden* is a whole new level with a collection of bewilder, lies, class scenarios and sweetly cut-throat asides. Finally, the guy defies you not to be impressed by what he's got. "Now I feel it necessary to remind you my friend, that applying with your gut left the most earth shaking event," C&X fronts on "Earth-Shaking Event," before telling the poor soul in question to "see it and hand me the m's!" Fast is, he's got the science and big ass synth sounds to get away with it, so hear him out. Plus, with each number clocking in under five minutes, he's got the brevity, the soul and the wit. "No Working" has the best two-way choice since porn star Johnny Sack last drew "Happy," while "So We Never, Ever" points towards hidden depths. "Being ridden" is an old kudos term referring to a state of possession where the gods take over an individual's frame and psyche to use for their own purposes. Kowdel may well have the sensitivity, but C&X has got the mouth. The hard emotional edges of "The Marriage" and "The Wayback Machine" testify to that.

However, those who performed his laptop hooks for "Tigercats" to the Tripp party pay attacks of being ridden will find plenty to keep their teeth shaking on *Being Ridden*. Stripped of vocals, Kowdel's appropriation of acoustic guitars, wimpy keyboards and crunching block beats somehow manages to sound both threatening and melancholy at the same time. Both releases are packaged in neat packages of the cover shot from Bowie's *Heroes* album, although it's scary how much more like the Thin White Duke Kowdel manages to look with a five-inch strip of gitta tape across his mouth. Go figure.

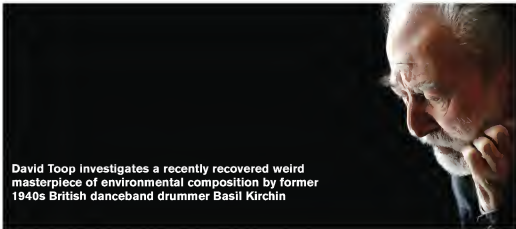
**COLLEEN  
EVERYONE ALIVE WANTS  
ANSWERS**  
LEAF MAST CO/LP

BY TOM RIDGE

Perian Cede Scott's debut is a collection of dreamlike instrumentals which fit between wandering, cascading chords and the more muted, muffled atmosphere of creaking stone and gristle, subterranean tremors. The opening arrangement and compressed ends of the title track under in a slightly chaotic sense of disorientation, but this sets the scene for Scott's offbeat expectations.

"Blonnelius" sends altogether more elegant, with a sweeping melody line and a vague undercurrent of grittiness. "Canny-Cat" combines a minimalist guitar loop with a sample of a child's voice, then undercuts it with an Ambient heartbeats sound, the explicit voice sample running parallel with the implicit word-like rhythm. Scott's musical allusions all share an affinity for simple, mystical phrases, and the effectiveness of repeated patterns, producing a calm sense of peace and rhythm.

Where there is some material is more familiar sounding, as with the 60s style pop melody on "Heart On Your Sleeve," she channels it through truncated, scratchy edits,



## David Toop investigates a recently recovered weird masterpiece of environmental composition by former 1940s British danceband drummer Basil Kirchin

### BASIL KIRCHIN QUANTUM: A JOURNEY THROUGH SOUND IN TWO PARTS ESSEX: JESSICA CD

Columbia/EMI's release of Basil Kirchin's *Worlds Within Worlds* in 1971 was one of those odd events in the music world, an anomaly that seemed to occupy its own space. Nothing happens outside of some sort of context, of course, and Kirchin's ambitious, individualistic approach to fusing studio techniques with live improvisation had origins that were as surprising as the music itself.

Kirchin was interested in the microscopic properties of communicative sound, revealed by a process of varying speed in recordings of bioacoustic recordings. Timestretching, as we now call it, is a powerful tool in the digital studio, a way to interpolate and model the internal substance of a sound. In the 1960s, when Kirchin first began his experiments, the only way to do this was by manipulating analogue tape. His first record combined the cries of mammals, birds and insects with the playing of musicians such as Evan Parker and bassist Daryl Runswick. The second *Worlds Within Worlds*, released by Island in 1974, extended his vocabulary with industrial soundscapes, primate calls and the vocalisations of autistic children living in a community in the valley of Schirmatt in Switzerland.

Both records existed outside of any scene. Though impressively visceral and original, their impact was small and Kirchin subsequently disappeared from view. Now a new version of this piece has been constructed by Kirchin from similar material, perhaps closer to his original concept yet at the same time adding conscious pathos and touches of musical structure to the raw emotionalism of his source material. *Worlds Within Worlds I* and II felt like swamp suction, a deliberate descent into the maelstrom; *Quantum* opens out through a more gentle conduit: reedy organ and the disarmingly Bopish, "Hello Kitty" voice of his wife, Esther Kirchin. "Something special will come from me," she confides on the edge of a whisper as Parker's rumbling soprano emerges from torrid rancor.

Consistent with all three releases is the irritatingly unspecific nature of musician credits. At least six are

present, though only four are named: Parker, flugelhorn/trumpeter Kenny Wheeler, Runswick and Graham Lyons, though no information is given about their contributions. Derek Bailey is playing, unmistakably, and perhaps vibraphone player Frank Ricotti, both of them ambiguously acknowledged on the original EMI release. In his sleeve notes, Kirchin identifies a moment in which one of the children, Andreas, sounds as if he is being strangled by a rock guitarist. I suspected Ray Russell (not as strangled, but as a guitarist who could adapt to 'fresh or 'rock' settings); a phone call to Bailey tells me I am on the wrong track, though he doesn't give me the right one.

Perhaps this autist vagueness stems from Kirchin's background. During the 1940s he played drums with his father in the Ivor Kirchin Band, later with Harry Roy and Ted Heath. I asked my 92-year-old mother if she recalled Ivor Kirchin's band, aware as I am of her predilection for stepping out at the Royal in Tottenham during that sporadically glamorous era. Remarkably, she did, though had no memory of what they looked like (men in suits, no doubt). A certain amount of exotic wildness seemed to feature in the band's book — "Stonage Mambo" and the like — which may have influenced Kirchin on his subsequent adventures in sound. Was he the instigator? A thesis on cawman music in the 40s and 50s awaits in the wings.

According to Bailey, Kirchin was a regular broadcaster with his own band. One minute he was accompanying the likes of Billy Eckstine and Sarah Vaughan during their UK sojourns. Then, many years before The Beatles and their Maharish madness, he was off to the Ramakrishna Temple in India, the reasons for which will remain intriguingly obscure until somebody organises an interview with the composer.

In collaboration with Jack Nathan, film scores for low budget horror features followed. The *Abominable Dr Phibes* and *The Mutations* among them, not to forget music for the Ronnie Barker Playhouse, which has increased my interest in the UK Gold channel somewhat. In other words, he was busy in the early 1970s; suddenly, apparently not busy at all.

Are there clues in this CD as to why he should have faded into three-decade obscurity? For new listeners

there are fascinating parallels with techniques of the present. Draw Daniel de Motos has named *Worlds Within Worlds* as one of his favourite musique concrète albums and there is a clear connection between Motos's manipulating the aural debris of Los Angeles image surgery and Kirchin's project to orchestrate primal communications. Both burrow deep into the molecular inner body of sound in search of a musical structure that respects both emotionally and on the level of collectively understood signs. Though there are awkward moments of juxtaposition in *Quantum*, there are overruns by passages flooded with gossamer joy. One section in particular, during part two, foregrounds the sustained vocalising of one of the autistic children. Kirchin adds a melancholic postbox horn chart which courts sentimentality yet succeeds in underlining the positive fierceness of communication at work. A gulf opens here between music and expressive sound. I am reminded of an Alabama baptising scene recorded by Alan Lomax, in which the woman who is being baptised unleashes a torrent of vocal ecstasy which reaches far deeper into the body's capacity for extreme feeling than any musician.

Whimsical leitmotifs recur which may be described as childlike. Their studied contrast with the sonic and emotional force we hear from these children is disturbing, an insight into childhood which any parent can recognise as more real than the sugar-coated version. Kirchin's strong point may be his isolation. In these works he has orchestrated according to his intuition, his strong personal relationship to the source material and the transformations of meaning that take place when that material takes on new shapes at previously unheard levels of matter.

Understandably, the label owner describes Kirchin as possibly the greatest 'lost' composer of the 20th century. Good for him, releasing the record, but in the incoherently hyperbolic world of new music this is hardly the point, let alone the truth. Essentially, we're talking about a single piece of work in three versions. Let's just say Kirchin is a one-off, a maverick with an original vision. Maybe the current climate will encourage him to further explorations. □

reinterpreting it as minimalist phenomenology. Some of this is fairly abstract, with stark tonal pulses and sound collages showing space with the more concise, chime-based tracks. But Schott displays a mastery of her material as she contrasts almost raw melodies with gritty effects, bringing them together into a convincing whole.

## CRESCENT BY THE ROADS AND THE FIELDS

BY CAT FAYTAN COVIL  
BY TOM ROGGE

The Bristol group's last release was *Collected Songs on the Swift (Linger) in 2000*. Spanning 1955-99, it revealed an approach that combined sparse, sometimes jazzy grooves with a kind of primitive space rock, its peripheries disorienting amid sudden, rude outbursts of noise. By *The Roads And The Fields* has taken three years to complete. In this sense, it documents Crescent's further development while bringing it under the aegis of a self-contained piece of work, rather than an anthology. In fact, a much newer sounding outfit is revealed in these recordings: there's a residue of murkiness and a monochromatic familiarity to these songs, and they're played out with a more considered overall style. The threat of implosion has been replaced by a gentle frothing of the edges.

Alongside the pared back instrumentation of echoing piano solos, polyrhythmic percussion and electric organ, Matt Jones's mumbled yet expressive vocals sound strangely expressive, somewhere between Jason Pierce and Ian Curtis. And if some of the new tracks echo older ones, they sound far more restrained. The use of brass on "Fountains" adds a jazzy swing which brings it closer to an exorbitant genre exercise, and the improvised backing of "River Deltas" is like a minimalist version of Sandy Denny's "Who Knows Where The Time Goes", but elsewhere the unimpeded flow of off-the-earl dreamlike music makes it worth the wait.

## DEEP LISTENING BAND & JOE MCPHEE QUARTET UNOUNCHABLE FIRE

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as well as providing occasional interludes. Her books' esoteric mythologizing, grotesque sentimentality (the death of Dickens's Little Nell provides a useful yardstick) and sappy stopgap are here well represented. The lengthy "Let Movement" noodles along pleasantly in lyrical fits and starts, seemingly expressive but actually expressive of nothing in particular. Every time the piece seems finally to have got going, it stops to accommodate one of Pollack's whimsical interludes. Fortunately, the improving on the rest of the CD is rather more interesting, with McPhee's soprano and Stuart Dempster's baritone providing one of two memorable moments.

When percussionist Susan Moore invited Ollivers to collaborate on a duo concert, the duo quickly expanded into an all-woman quartet, and *The New Circle* has come into being. On paper, the line-up is a less mixed proposition than the combined Deep Listening Band/McPhee Quartet, but that's not how it plays. Ollivers, on accordion, is more expressive in this line-up, which includes the splendid Rose Herlin (violin, voice), Marjorie Buzard (baritone, didgeridoo, conch), and soprano Kristin Norderval. Only four of the 12 tracks involve the full quintet, but the two, quartets and a solitary duo entail no diminution of imagination or focus. Norderval's raptures and vocalizing are based on lightweight texts by Gertrude Stein, Flaubert, Gertrude and Sigrid Lindqvist, and a line from a wistfully misread Norwegian medieval ballad is uttered. Although Norderval delivers some texts in an exaggerated, rather acrobatic manner, not allowing the words to speak for herself with the general strain of the music.

## BRIAN ENO JANUARY 07003: BELL STUDIES FOR THE CLOCK OF THE LONG NOW

ENO, CD, 100 MIN

BY JULIAN COWLEY

"Civilization is moving fast into a patologically short attention span," writes Stewart Brand in his book *The Clock Of The Long Now* and Responsibility. He argues that "some sort of balancing corrective to the short-sightedness is needed — some mechanism or myth which encourages the long view." This is quoted by Brian Eno in his notes to January 07003. Brand is President of the Long Now Foundation, established in San Francisco in 1996 with the mission of encouraging long views and long-term responsibility. Eno was a founder member and the only British presence on the board.

The *Clock Of The Long Now* was the foundation's first major project, a 10,000 year clock conceived by Danny Hillis. "It ticks once a year, bongs once a century, and the cuckoo comes out every millennium." Brand perceives this clock as an embodiment of "deep time": an icon to "reform the way people think" and grant "permission to think longer". A prototype is displayed in London's Science Museum. Eno has assumed responsibility for envisaging the sound this clock might make to announce passing time, and he opted for the age-old custom of ringing bells. His notes glance back to the far ancient. Egerton bell manufacture and the cosmopolitan conceptualist reveals his roots with an exposure of the English practice of charge-ringing.

Hillis supplied an algorithm to generate a series of bell-ringing changes marking the life of the Long Now Clock. Using this, Eno decided to investigate the sound of the chimes in January 07003, a month roughly half-way through the clock's life. His bells are synthetic studio constructions, carefully calculated overtones combined to produce the required pitches. Some of these added bells, others are imaginary concoctions which juggle the overtone series, project the sonorities of a futuristic ceremonial compound, reconstruct the sound of the biggest bell ever made or answer the question "what if a bell became a cello?"

The project is quintessentially Eno, in elegant Jorge Luis Borges story of a recording: a field of megalithic ruins; antiquary discovery as serious play. Histories Alan Corbin, in his book *Village Beats*, argues that the attempt to "reconstitute" press in the imagination, the bid to meet new life in companionist nostalgia is evidence of nostalgia in the wake of the "disintegration of earlier modes of evolution and listening". Eno's consent to realize the communicative function of bells is instinctively bound up with modes of evaluation and listening that address the past and he sees it, of short-term sekulism and quick fix globalization. It might be argued that a form of nostalgia is at the heart of the Long Now project, but it's good to be reminded that time is a political issue, that living slowly offers a different order of experience to the survivalist imperative of globality.

## FAB TRANSFORMING THE SPACE CAMP 204 CD

WILLIAM PARKER VIOLEN TRIOS

SCRAPBOOK

THEIRSTY EAR THEIRSTY 103 CD

BY BEN WATSON

When he changed his name from William Vincent Wallker to Billy Bang when he began playing free jazz on the radio instrument of his invention, this violinist doesn't make all his records under that name. He's an acronym for the trio of Bang, Joe Fonda on bass and Barry Altschul on drums, while the William Parker Violin Trio comprises Bang, drummer Harriet Drake and the bass playing leader. Nevertheless, Bang's incredible violin — free, delicate, bluesy, witty, sad — makes the music both with his indelible sound.

CMP — standing for Creative Improvised Music Projects — have their own philosophy of recording. "The compression, homogenization, EQ-ing, peak-reducing, splicing, mixing or electronic folding." This notion results in this, rather grey sounding record with an enormous dynamic range. However, both Bang and Fonda insisted on using amplifiers, which means we are spared the "batter the neighbours" peaks and stretches of silence that make other CMP albums a nuisance to play. The set consists of two tapes by Bang, two by Altschul, one by Fonda and a free improvisation titled "Colagio Battista". The music is not forced by this agenda, unlike those which play havoc with jazz in other quarters, and has an ease and intimacy which is secondary. Bang plays a melody to make you aware, a skill reserved for a handful of musicians. His solos are elaborate and imaginative, often tying with absolute dementia,

yet always laced with a sly humor. His music traces any dissonance between jazz and free sound irrelevant, and asks deep questions about the current vogue for noise (guitarist Joe Morris is convinced that the current anti-party against swing or smart festivals is actually a veiled form of racism). Fonda's bass is superb, simultaneously firm, simple and apologetic. Altschul is so good at making the drums his hard to hear him as a separate voice, but when he solos it's a timely balanced collage of overlaid sounds, as stark and abstract as a Mondrian. You'll recall that Altschul's drumming made Circle one of Brand's best groups.

William Parker and Harriet Drake are the dream rhythm team for a saxophone. They like *L.A. Dog* group with Peter Brötzmann has allowed him to cut some of his best records. Parker's hands are so big and strong he can make the giant of string instruments and sing like a guitar. Indeed, his vocalizing of swing and groove made Cecil Taylor's *an CD* box set *Two For A Lovely Day* a delight. However, for his beseeching violin to work, Bang needs something less elemental. Rather like his namesake (less on solo sax), Parker appears to be ploughing a furrow that breaks no accompaniment. His relentless string line sounds like the dust of *Highway* from another room, and it ruins the record.

The whole point of the bass in jazz is that the orchestral instrument becomes a tuned drum, but Parker takes this so far and he plays so repetitively that it won't allow anyone else to fly. Thirty four's production isn't flawed by anything, so it's a shame they didn't get Joe Fonda and Barry Altschul into the studio instead. Billy Bang is so essential, he needs quicker accompaniment.

## FRØDE GJERSTAD WITH JOHN EDWARDS & MARK SANDERS THE WELSH CHAPEL

FRØDE GJERSTAD WITH JOHN EDWARDS & MARK SANDERS

THE WELSH CHAPEL

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FRØDE GJERSTAD WITH JOHN EDWARDS & MARK SANDERS

# The UK's most hostile experimental unit have spent 20 years opposing everything you've got - they even hate anti-art. David Keenan listens to the noise of struggle

## THE NEW BLOCKADERS GESAMTNICHTSWERK HYPERCOSM TNE80 4X20

Last year was the 20th anniversary of the founding of The New Blockaders, one of the UK's most consistently defiant and formally hostile experimental groups. Starting with their name, they combined a masked mythology worthy of the Justice League Of America with a militant anti-art/anti-music stance. Their stance manifested itself in a series of obliterating aural documents and a string of 'live offensives' that did violence to feeble concepts of musicianship and technique. The core of TNB are Richard and Philip Rupenus. For all their lack of any public profile, this pair of provocateurs have had an absurdly disproportionate influence over the development of noise music. In the early 80s they fostered vague umbilical connections to many key post-industrial players, forming loose alliances that shed a little contextual light on an otherwise intensely personal and deliberately hermetic project.

They supported Whitehouse early on, collaborated several times with David Jackman's Organum and once with Coil, on the 1984 Vorles Campaign cassette. Indeed, Richard Rupenus also recorded an incredibly obscure album for Steven Stapleton's United Nations label as part of Massoshadhu, as well as working as Bladder Plank and coordinating and producing the globe-spanning Mixed Band Philanthropist project. Their key early collaborator, however, was Mirror's Andrew Chalk, whose Renal Confine did much to enrage the duo's already profoundly nihilistic musical vision. Yet for all their grounding in the UK tape underground, their influence has been most forceful in Japan, where they have long been adulated by noisemakers like Merzbow, Hijokaden and Incapacitants.

Roughly translating as 'Totalnotwork' - a play on the Wagnerian ideal of the Gesamtkunstwerk, the Totals artwork - TNB's four CD set Gesamtnichtswerk is an appropriately styled 'artology' that mops up some

of the group's most important releases, it includes their notoriously rare debut album, 1982's *Changez Les Blockeurs*, alongside live cassettes documenting their various performances at Newcastle's tiny Morden Tower, a series of corrosive 'simphonies' and a disc of anniversary recordings tied straight to tape last year. It looks and feels glorious, featuring a shattered CD barnacled to the outside and four individually cased discs accompanied by a sandpaper-bound, handmade booklet. This special edition is limited to 50 copies, but there's also a standard run of 500.

Right from the start TNB's approach to noise assemblage was dialectic in the most punk sense of the word, a defiantly random accumulation of misshapen machine guts, atonal pluries, corrosive feedback and fisted gadgets. "The Church of The Absurd marches on!" trumpeted their 1982 manifesto, now reprinted in the accompanying booklet. "Anti-music, anti-art, anti-magazines, anti-books, anti-films, anti-dubs, anti-communications... We will make anti-statements about anything and everything. We will make a point of being pointless. We will drive backwards up one way streets." Two pages later, in true absurdist style, they double back on themselves when it dawns on them, "Even anti-art is art... that is why we reject it!" Thankfully the subsuming sense of spontaneity permeating most of the set's performances serves to short-circuit this kind of rhetorical locked groove.

Listened to with 21st century ears, *Changez Les Blockeurs* (here bulked up with bonus reworked tracks) sounds comparatively sparse, almost methodical. Long seconds of charged silence are sealed and subdivided by hammer bursts, scraping chains and the sound of bucking metal. It was recorded live in a shed, and you can just about hear the pitter-patter of rain on the roof as the brothers work oscillating sickones from rusty wheelchair parts. Although it's still compelling, it feels closer to acoustic improvisation than the atmospheric (logic meltdown promised in the text. It strikes immediate parallels with the early destructive rituals of



Enslavende Neutronen or the automatic music of Fluxus operators like Joe Jones.

If such companions leave TNB sounding weedy, the next disc, featuring four 'live offensives' on Newcastle between 1983-84, is where the group really take off. The cradle of broken amplifiers precipitates a whole new order of independently morphing soundforms, all given shape via flashes of metallic lightning, smashed glass, trashed microphone feedback and acoustic low-end pellets that scale the walls like slugs. Gradually accruing hypnotic significance, they birth spontaneous form in the shape of textures that recur with such accumulative force, they threaten to collapse the performance under its own weight. In this mode, their music feels like inverted minimalism, a leery psychedelia.

Containing their 1991 Simphone LP and cassette plus a bonus track, disc three sees the duo bracketing their conceptions with a little more formal consideration and the help of fellow ascetics. Anomali to create some of their most zoned inventions, like "Simphone in a Minor". Made up from evacuated tape and punctuated by a single sound event, it feels like the sonic equivalent of a deep field shot straight into the abyss.

Forced to follow the epic, 'edge of pans' topography of disc three, the final disc of contemporary recordings is a slight disappointment. It's as if the weight of their 20 year history has had a slightly confining and concating effect on their music. The 20 minutes of respectful silence on "Null Sei Ohr" is pretty funny, but the opening "Circum-Circum" is an unremarkable investigation into the kind of metal sonities that Andrew Chalk effectively put to bed on his *The Full Use Of Nothing* cassette (1985), a sound source that TNB have referenced and reworked several times through their career. Then again, if the main goal of a blockade is to resist progress, these '20th Anniversary Wheelchairs' document the final resolution of an endearingly eccentric and impenetrable arc. □



were both working with John Stevens. Such was the drummer's impact on their musical understanding that, on the opening track and during other annotated passages on North Atlantic Drift, it's not hard to imagine his gill-pat percussion moving through the space between double bass and sax. Stephens is an excellent musician and the recording, made in 1990, is a welcome opportunity to hear him close up and at length. *Griot Galaxy* (2000), his earlier recording with Quedada, also featured drummer Louis Moholo and Norwegian guitarist Håvard Fossheim, and his bass contribution was definitive accordingly.

For much of North Atlantic Drift Quedada shows right down, disclosing revealing aspects of his playing that are scarcely hinted at on *The Welsh Chapel*. Stephens approximates the album's volatile take with bowed harmonics but he's more than just a complimentary presence and he draws expertly on his instruments' wide communicative range to effectively sustain, substantiate and imaginative statements.

## GRIOT GALAXY LIVE AT THE DIA 1983

UNIVERSITY STEREO CD (2000)

BY DAN WARBURG

Founded in Detroit in 1972 by saxophonist Faruk Z. Bey, Griot Galaxy had only a handful of albums under their belt when a serious motorcycle accident left Bey to disband the group in 1989. With copies of their 1981 debut *Kiss on Black And White* as rare as hen's teeth, owing to an unfortunate series of events that led to half of them being thrown in the city dumps, the discovery of this high quality recording of a complete GG concert at the Detroit Institute of Arts on 25 January 1983, is cause for celebration.

Back then the group consisted of Bey, Anthony Holland and David McMurray on alto, tenor and soprano saxophones, and clematis/bassist Janbu Shahid and drummer Ben Tobal. Shahid and Tobal subsequently went on to become one of music's most sought-after rhythm sections, while Holland co-founded The Creative Arts Collective and McMurray became up to Clinton's. A few months after a storm with Funkadelic, Bey is, happily, back on form on another recent Entropy release *Archaic Pattern*.

Uncouthly influenced by The Art Ensemble Of Chicago, both musically and sartorially – their compositions reference the whole gamut of "Griot Black Music", from earthy funk to imitative free jazz, and they too were fond of weaving ritual war paint onstage – Griot Galaxy live were a force to be reckoned with. Bey's "Men Outha" is a signal in its juxtaposition of a slow moving baseline with uppompo polyrhythmic drumming, the horns gradually picking their modal theme out of a minimalist soup of nebulous apertures.

Elsewhere his chamber zoning nods respectfully towards Marion Brown and Oliver Lake, while the steamy blues "Fastest" belongs in a worthy city with Shabazz's "Neocropolis" in an extended suite that weaves complex polyrhythms together with the rough edges and primary colours of an African jazz before veering off into a hand-swinging central section in a tricky 11/4. Tobal's speck ops leads to an ecstatic three sax blowout accompanied by some wild cymbal bashing and inspired vocalists, a tribal vibe pursued on "Mars Society", where GG are

joined by Sadiq Bey and Fahal Igbo on African percussion. It's no coincidence that the group's name reveals a debt to San Ra – they often billed themselves as "The Sci-Fi Band".

Like Ra, Bey is a master orchestrator who knows how to make a quiet sound like a big band. On Ra's "Spectrum", the exquisite voicing of sustained saxophone tones above Shahid's joyful two notes bass pulse creates an intimacy worthy of Mingus. Griot Galaxy was one of the only groups to play with the chops – and the balls – to cover Ra's fondly cited "Shadow World". And they did it in style.

## THE HAFER TRIO NO MAN PUT ASUNDER: 7 FRUITFUL AND SEAMLESS UNIONS

ON SMALL COPE CD

BY JIM HAYNES

The more information you have about The Hafler Trio, the more difficult it becomes to group what The Hafler Trio are – or even appear to be – doing. I hesitate to posit that Andrew McKelvie, currently the sole member of the trio, has engineered his complex presentations of sound, text and gestural notations in order to hide and obfuscate. However, covert activities do not appear to be outside the realm of possibility. McKelvie has publicly stated his affinity for the teachings of the late Greek-Armenian theorist Gi Gardetzi, who was convinced that a stream of random knowledge could be traced back to the beginning of time. He presented his philosophies through some allegorical sketches in enigmatic aphorisms and linguistic cryptography. For both The Hafler Trio and Gardetzi, there's no authored explanation for their activities, rather, they beseech their audiences to awaken to this esoteric knowledge through an ongoing process of perception, absorption and assimilation of the world around them through their work.

No Man Put Asunder, the second in a trilogy in three parts for the trio, plants its interpretation of one of Gardetzi's aphorisms as the main subject. McKelvie's activities trace made up of poetic fragments: "Love of consciousness evokes the same in response/ Love of feeling evokes the opposite/ Love of body [sic] depends on type and polarity [sic]." How this relates to the epic sonic meditation on the disc is merely part of the conundrum that is The Hafler Trio. Ever more puzzling is the relationship of this composition and *Oliver's Great Openings*, the preceding album in the trilogy. Both albums give the impression that they're identical, with the major exception of the second being that it's a tone lower than the first. These are massive dense constructions of enigmatic vibrations, continuous tonal flutter and electrified ether. Both are beautifully rendered and appear to use the same ambiguous source material, which resembles the minimalism of Phil Niblock with gossamer feedback coursing through its veins. Uniting the two albums back to back, the fluctuations in one mirror those in the other. Yet the inevitable error in my ability to perceive and recall the exact positions of the movements in the album could be the place where McKelvie's work came to be.

It's quite possible that the album presents these two works as a challenge to abilities of perception and recollection. This is a tall order, for sure, but until the release of the third and

final album *No More Tears, Of One Pleat: 11 Unequalled Observations*, it's impossible to say. But taken on its own as a fragment of a larger whole, No Man Put Asunder is a beautiful, majestic piece of hermetic art.

## HAMILTON/SILVERTON/ MARGOLIS ANALOGUE SMOOKE POCUS 01093 SMOO

BY PHILIP CLARK

The sleeveless describe Analogue Smooke as "85 years late for lunch". Well, this two CD set of Hamilton/Silverston and Analogue Smooke certainly delivers. It's the way of a proper meal. American sound artists Tom Hamilton and Al Margolis are both interested in transporting electronic music away from the rather sterile, academic environment to which it has become accustomed, and opening technology up to the possibility of spontaneous interaction with the performer. For his part, poet and speaker Mike Silverston declares that "at first blind, the alert listener detects a link between Analogue Smooke and Maclean [Blaetky]. Rather, they say, the text reveals its author's interest in cryptochannels, its status of non-descent".

Perhaps I don't have enough background to make the link Silverston requires of me, but it's more likely that – as Silverston's quote communicates – Analogue Smooke does too good a job of alienating listeners through its impenetrable wall of satisfaction and luxurious high regard. Hearing Silverston's delivery reverberating on about how "7 marks are out of myself" when I'm out there, mentally like Mozart" and that "happiness is a very green bag in bag body tree" can only be endured for a few minutes before deep embarrassment sets in and the fast forward button becomes the only escape route. There's not much more going on with Hamilton and Margolis's sounds, which slowly stay away from direct electronic humming and flubulent grunts.

## MICK HARVEY AUSTRALIAN RULES

MUTE KINGSLEY CD

BY LOUISE GRAY

A few months towards the end of Mick Harvey's soundtrack for Paul Goldman's 2002 film *Australian Rules*, Don Don and Charlie are called "What I Come To Her" surfaces. Slow paced and gravel voiced, this piece of Nashville-wrapped Aussie wilderness pulled from the trio's 1993 album *Sad But True* is a weird transportation of a quintessentially American song form to the Australian outback – specifically the remote rolling town of Prospect Bay, where Goldman's cinematography and Harvey's evocative landscape take place.

What with Harvey's *Red Sands* leader Nick Cave now busy writing what he terms a "longform Western", the temptation to raise questions about how both men view the Aussie badlands through a *Wild West* filter is a big one. But even if there's something worth exploring in this theme, the subtlety of Harvey's Australian Rules – and his approach to film writing as a whole – introduces a secondary education. Arguably, this is the process that gives the soundtrack its room to breathe.

In essence, *Australian Rules* is a small collection of motifs, developed and deepened over the 70 minutes. And it's clear

from the start – a breeding sound and some spiky peaks, reminiscent of David Lind's arrangements on *Requiem For A Dream* – that the films got some serious ground to cover. This takes in racism, thwarted love and sporting prowess, while the overt violence of Aussie "no rules" football becomes a metaphor for bigotry and emotional turbulence.

Harvey augments his material over time with some delicate work from a string trio, and it's in these sections that you hear the true essence of the film. Harvey's primary dream alone, a space thrashing guitars and very little percussion, is reworking with a heart beauty by the end of the film, but that's only after he's successfully ground it into the dust.

## HISS ZAHIR

NOISEBOX 1000-1 CD

BY BEN WATSON

Three of Hiss's members are from Oslo: Ivar Grydeland (guitar), Tony Nafstad (bass) and Ingar Zach (drums). The fourth member is Pat Thomas, keyboardist extraordinaire from Oxford. The instrumentation may sound traditional, but the music is delectably novel, the sounds integrated according to the same esoteric – superlative, super hard – rhythmic mesh as Bark! and Deek Barley's *Luminate* quartet. Zach has issued two duets with Bailey, drumming with a clinical evenness and rhythmic flair that Bailey compares to that of James Murray, the drummer who went from the Music Improvising Company to King Crimson. Ivar Grydeland studied guitar with Tony Doney, while Pat Thomas is Bailey's favourite dep if he can't make a gig in his own right. This album implies that Hiss play live improvisation, but as a lump term for advanced music that most people dislike, it's woefully insufficient. Hiss have emerged from the same orbit as the other acts billed as "Acidic cool", and they're a group with a sonic identity, a possible alternative to, say, Spacemen, or even Radiohead. Ivar Grydeland thinks of his complete guitar language as "a series of small, sharp, but not in order to look like a lack of thought-about notes. The rhythm is a similar stop-start to that of Cecil Taylor with Daley at the drums, but not because Hiss are trying to copy them. It's the only way all these differentiated fragments of noise can become a dialogue, the only way to break the spell!" music casts over musicians and listeners. There's a hands-on nervousness to the playing that belongs to a generation weaned on computer games and mobile phones. The musicians' anxious posture, palpable reflexes that control a computer pace of conscious thought.

Composers have endeavored repeatability as the essence of identity, the ultimate banalistic tool. 12 tone, serialism and 60s classical electronic music formally protested this development by creating musical singularities. As avant garde classical music has focused on sound – "spectral" composition, Nono, Scelsi, Luchermann – more and more importance attaches to its real-time interpreters, like cellist Frances-Marie Uitti.

Hiss deal with these issues actively. Whereas Supplement uses improvised effects as badly as possible, delectable on its own, Hiss pursues a four-part discussion which challenges individualist historicists at every juncture, a music



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driven by a collective greed for novel, variety and jokes. Though they sound totally different, the rhythmic coordination is as accomplished as The Skatalites or JB's. The instruments sound as if they're handwired to the musician's brainwaves: if they're thinking, the music stops.

Heid's music is interpretive and attention-grabbing. There's no smoking beer, but it always has the clappers and funk like a madcap. The sound engineering is by Toby Robinson at the Moat in London, and his work is getting better and better: it's priceless: a record to make everyone's earbuds pickle.

# **JACKIE-O MOTHERFUCKER EUROPE 2002** U SOUND XXXX XXXX BY DAVID STEVENS

What a dumb motherfucking name. That's always my first thought on encountering Jackie-O, who's evolved from a guitar-sax two piece in 1994 to a multi-instrumental, multifaceted collective flouting a mixture of guitar, electronics and turntables. Still, the misnomer implies some very late, yadda, yadda! NYC anarcho-punk outfit, flipping the bird one last time before sinking into oblivion. In fact, Jackie-O are a surprisingly resilient and recurrent proposition, as this two CD set of live, unfiltered recordings made in Europe over the autumn/winter of last year demonstrates.

Both CDs begin with peeps that set forth in sage mode, single drum-based improvisations with ultra-style effects pulsed and discarded tangentially, before swelling and downwinding into something more accidental and raucous. The second piece of CD one, recorded in Birmingham, lurches and waxes, untidely and sensibly, with fumes of reeds and harmonica — you're reminded of a mix of Gavin Bryars at *Sinking Of The Titanic* mode and later solo David Thomas (especially in the vocals), all at sea and strongly flabbergasted, the disk constantly shifting about beneath him. The barely audible narrative of the Rotterdam recording on CD two succinctly bears this out: "If you're ever experienced being sick and hallucinating..."

It's occasionally sad of Jackie-O Motherfucker that, like colictees such as Godspeed, their music says something about the North American musical (and physical) landscape. They seem, however, more adrift than that. Occasional pop references seem to help you grasp your bearings: a piece recorded in Manchester alludes specifically to Canned Heat's "On The Road Again", while on CD two a somewhat ethereal chorus of gospel gives way to an uneasy rendition of "Amazing Grace". These, however, only heighten the exquisite sense of disorientation. You're not on any sort of road with Jackie-O and the rendition of "Grace" sounds like the delirious conclusion of drowning men singing to themselves.

This collection mostly works, but not always. Occasionally, especially when they get over-embowered, the music sounds like a number of musicians embarking on individual musical monologues, obvious to each other's presence on stage — a noutrite heard with this sort of music. They're better, as on the Stockholm recording, when they stop blowing and playing hard, recede and let the collective, organic nature of their sound do its own breathing thing. This works especially well in Helsinki, the

cumulative arduousness of track 4 a listening equivalent of driving in the half-light of dusk through unbarbaric but spectacular foreign terrain.

# **PAUL LANSKY ALPHABET BOOK BRIDGE 9126 CD** BY JASON WATSON

New Yorker Paul Lansky is a Professor of Music at Princeton University in New Jersey and a leading exponent of computer music, but he's far removed from the image that might suggest of a hermetic technophile breathing rarified musical air. Lansky is fascinated by the sounds of everyday life — cars passing, kitchen stovetops rattling, popular music (including rap and Heavy Metal) and, most notably, human speech.

A series of memorable pieces on the CD More Than Just Chatter (Bridge 1994) process the speaking voice of his wife, actor Hannah Kucuy, at times approximating melody yet disclosing a music intrinsic to talking. Though *Seascape* (Bridge 1997), a computer opus, was in many ways the culmination of this intimate work, Lansky has also used more impersonal materials — arbitrary events at a shopping mall on "Quakerbridge", and random highway business harmonised on "Night Traffic", both of which are on *Homebrew* (Bridge 1992), far from being ends in themselves, computers are, in his compositions, means to draw these sounds and voices out of the daily clutter and find new relationships with them.

Lansky's refined awareness of current recording and computer technologies enables him to extract music from what he terms "wastephase". His musical training involved study with the rigorous serialists Milton Babbitt and George Perle, but he long ago adopted very different priorities. Alphabet Book was inspired by the musical fun had by children's television programme *Sesame Street* with letters and numbers, "these atoms of daily life", as Lansky calls them. He and Mackay note with their usual precision and sometimes with electronic modifications, various permutations of the alphabet and numbers from one to ten. Music created on iMac using the SuperCollider synthesis language is draped around these angular peripheries of communication.

It's characteristically bright and attractive: vaporous drones overlaid with gamelan sonorities, xylophone tones, percussive clicks, liquid drips. It gleams, shimmers and is radiant yet enfolded with complexities that reward repeated listening. The CD also presents three animations by Garry Klein available in purely audio format: a whimsical cartoon about Hannibal the Cannibal and two elegant graphic realisations of "ABC" and "Pattern's Patterns".

# **THOMAS LEHN & PAUL LOVENS ACHTUNG GHOX 537 CD** BY BEN WATSON

Achtung was recorded at two concerts: ten minutes from the Musiktheater in Cologne on 13 May 2000, and 48 minutes at Darchaus Zerkowendorf museum on 8 September the same year. Thomas Lehn plays the analogue synthesizer he's celebrated for, and Paul Lovens plays the instant stop-start drums he's been

playing since his 60s conversion from jazz to free improvisation. On the cover there's a tiny camer snik pried high with creaking, an "unauthorised photograph" by Lovens of a "sculpture" by Carolee Usavage "enhanced" by Monika Lehn: we can't tell whether Lovens is trespassing copyright or simply presenting domestic awkwardness as art. Music, record and cover production/design are credited to Lehn and Lovens, so one concludes that this is a significant statement from both musicians.

The reason one looks for significance in the packaging is because it's hard to find it in the music. Lovens is capable of an astonishing array of percussive timbres (he's been building his own drum kits for 40 years), and his speed and vitality are undimmed. The problem is that Lehn gives Lovens nothing to play with: his rumbles and squeals mimic only the most obvious parameters. Lovens' warped symbols have to a whole first halfway into part two when Lovens is loud. Lehn goes loud too. Lovens's responses are too guarded and his musical imagination too restricted to supply the parallel speculation that free improvisation thrives on. There is none of the brooding of expectation that creates musical tension; no reminder of actuality as possibility, no stretching or bending of time, just a series of inert sonic treatments.

The duo never ignites, never take off into musical realms that might surprise even themselves. It's like visiting an art exhibition of panels covered with polka-dots and carpet, sandpaper and plywood: very boring. Come back, Misha Mengelberg, we need you.

# **LONDON IMPROVISERS ORCHESTRA FREEDOM OF THE CITY 2002** EMMANUEL XXXX BY JAMAL COWLEY

Composers of large-scale structures for improvising musicians face obvious logistical difficulties securing a suitable venue at a suitable time: getting the right kinds of instrument involved and on the spot where needed; attracting an audience that doesn't divide along a putative composed/improvised faultline. The annual May meeting of the London Improvisers Orchestra at London's Conway Hall, considering the need regular, lower profile gatherings at the Rod Jones in Holloway, goes a long way to overcoming these difficulties and, as Martin Davidson's Enneman documentation testifies, this Freedom Of The City event has fostered some extraordinary music. Capturing the juggernaut energy and torrential subtleties of the LIO in action is a major challenge. Davidson has been invaluable but not unrealistic in addressing it.

The 2002 festival recording opens with Simon H. Fell's "Too Busy" for orchestra and pre-recorded sound, a requiem for drummer John Stevens. The piece-recorded material includes church bells, electronics, applause and Stevens speaking and playing solo. In recognisable free style, the music embraces disparate elements that coincide or collide in rich simultaneity. There's a marvellous translucent quality to quieter passages, the hearing through the walls of layers of sound, something like the haze of a London morning created with "The Houseboats At Stockbridge".

The voice of Terry Day, a drumming contemporary of Stevens, surfaces to pay tribute

near the end of "Ice Day," Day's own "Ruthless" follows, a shrewd pocket weighing of fame and anonymity He delivers a memorable

performance, enacting the words, activating meaning, and the orchestra responds, repeatedly erupting into turbulence, then settling back into a light and agile percussive continuum. Steve Beersford's "Concerto For Paul Rutherford" is a "sonata," with Beersford abating the imposing ensemble while Rutherford's solo Rutherford plays without external guidance of any kind. A tribute to Rutherford, Beersford's "Concerto" also acknowledges the springboard to UO provided by Butch Merri, who converted London apprentices to realize his conditions and showed the viability of such big and variegated group sessions

At this particular meeting, musical resources range from Orphy Robinson's jazz-inclined vibes to Adam Bahrman's unprompted yet brilliantly deployed everyday objects

"Mama," a highly disciplined listening procession (it featuring Tjui Marsh, Louis Mohlo and Mark Sanders marks mid-point in the programme. But Rutherford's contribution "Phone In," for orchestra and mobile phones, follows John Cag's advice that if you find a sound really irritating you should incorporate it into a piece of music. A tapestry of timbral contexts, including sumptuous bass clannets, double basses, wallops, vines, clipped trumpet tones, drum, chattering saxophones and noisefield electronics, suffers unevenly interruption from into phone melodies

Electric guitar: Dave Tucker's "Gello" is a highly effective ad hoc collection that builds layers of sustained tones gradually and inexorably from hash to the brink of pandemonium. The set closes with violinist Philip Wachmann's "Fanfare For UO", alternating lean strings and ebullient wind instruments while making the audience participate in an exploration of shifting moods and spatial relationships

## GARY LUCAS OPERATORS ARE STANDING BY: THE ESSENTIAL GARY LUCAS 1988-1996

KNITTING FACTORY KNUITERS CD BY NICK SOUTHGATE

The sheer versatility of the guitar means players who expand, mutate, reinvent or otherwise pivot forward the guitar's possibilities are granted a certain reverence. But the distinction between virtuosity and innovation is a fine but essential one. True, in the right hands a guitar's sound is infinitely malleable, and Lucas has such a pair of hands. Nevertheless such freedom can tempt folly.

The collection of tracks, drawn from Lucas's various 'tand' to find group and solo outputs between 1988 and 1996, is at its best when highlighting its trademark sinuous and shimmering fingerpicked lines. He is sunest when playing outside and elegantly stumbling solo instruments like "Children's March" or "Food's Cap." Lucas, of course, most famous as a group member, first with Captain Beefheart and later with Jeff Buckley, and with the recent Must Be Band tour, this collection has about it something of the backing player's beloved and protesting thrust into the limelight. Left to his own devices, the frequently enjoyable songs

become mere access for lushly guitar playing. An affectionate cover of Pink Floyd's "Astronomy Domine", for example, is more proficient than profound and other vocal-led songs on this collection serve to confirm rather than confound his position as a supporting player.

His 'tand my hand to anything showmanship betrays him utterly with an exorable wall through, of all things, the theme from UK soap opera *Eastenders*. The plot seems unambiguously true before even the first hearing is over. Complications will feel better rewarded by the other two unmissable tracks ("The Stumble" and "Volga Boatman"). Fittingly the standout song is one of Lucas's own compositions where his playing does perfectly complement the lyric, called, tellingly "I Want To Play Your Guitar".

## LUOMO THE PRESENT LOVER

FOUR TRACKS FIVE CD/LP BY JOHN MURPHY

The second album by Vladimir Delay in his Luomo guise, *The Present Lover* finds the cover looks like a perfume ad meticulously clipped from *Vogue*. The music, superficially at least, has an intoxicating sheen — very aspirational. The implied imagery directs you to some desolate 80s penthouse, minimally stocked with mild black consumer durables and enervated models.

One of the many pleasures of this fabulous record, though, is that Delay successfully pulls off something far more sophisticated than irony. *The Present Lover* is nothing so clear as a subversion of 80s designer music. Rather, it's a reconstruction of that decade using real tools: the clicks and cuts and bow creaks portrayed by Delay in the more straightforwardly experimental music he releases under his own name; and an emotional valency that's at odds with the alleged superficiality of trad House and Microhouse.

Even more than 2001's *Vocabulary*, *The Present Lover* is perfect built out of error and uncertainty. This time, the pop influences are deployed more overtly: the textures finished with a thicker coat of loquax, as if Delay now has a greater confidence to embrace the commercial possibilities of his project. It's no coincidence that the *Vocabulary* track which reappears here in a new guitar-led and fractionally less successfully form is that album's best anthem, "Tosco".

The vocals, too — provided by Johanna Niemela, Nathanael, Artye Grot-Fuchs and Roz O'Hara — are given more prominence, though Delay makes his singers gracefully materialise out of the backing tracks rather than over-commanding the tunes. The grooves of the disc, heightening rather than dampening the lyrical content. It's a trick best seen in the almost unmissably lovely "So You", where first the vocal performance gives a plaintive quality to theoretically glop sentiments — "Do I want too much? All I give to you isn't enough" — before Delay's subtle edits make it edgier, nervier, even a little punky.

In other words, Delay has created something profound from engaged materials. *The Present Lover* could so easily have been a drier, drier, manipulation of genres — a high-handed appropriation of what his contemporaries consider downmarket, by an artist keen to show

how easy it is for him to mimic the mainstream. Instead, Delay has done something infinitely smarter: An exceptional record: audaciously conceived, beautifully executed and, most surprisingly, with an unusually poignant promise of romance.

## MELT BANANA CELL-SCAPE

A-ZIP A-ZIP CD/LP BY NICK SOUTHGATE

Cell-Scape is Melt Banana's fifth studio album, arriving as their angry sound of suburban Taylor begins a tenth year unquenched. After a decade, Melt Banana's sound cannot be explained as merely affectionate or accident. Rewardingly, then, Cell-Scape buttresses the familiar spasms of stop-start pop peek with lush and spacious episodes of Ambient sound. The cover artwork's esoteric diagrams and magnified cell structures mirror the album's exploitation of tensions between electricity's natural and unnatural possibilities.

As with previously handled the high end timbre (this of unkindly handled electric guitar are still combined with gabbled vocals that sound like a tormented catatonicizing through The Pines back catalogue: The plentiful lyrics are still longer on suggested menace than actual lucidity, as titles like "Last Parts Singing Me So Cold" and "Like A White Bat In A Box, Dead Matters Go On" testify.

The progression on this album is to use the beats most powerfully and lushly as a metronomic weapon, often under sampled organic backdrops: The opening "Phantasmagoria" and the final, ten minute "Guts For Cell-Scape" bookend not only the CD but Melt Banana's bow new musical world. The undulating progress of bubbling string throbbling and tinkling over the fierce propulsion of precise basslines means that this album is haunted by the ghosts of space rock stairwells like Hawkwind or even — gasp! — Union Deep. Indeed, there are times when Cell-Scape convincingly answers the imaginary rock history question: *Explain and discuss the sound of a post-punk Pink Floyd*.

Melt Banana's decision to set their guitars for the heart of the sun, while embracing the dark side of the Moog, makes Cell-Scape an impressive and compelling album. While other Japanese guitar acts play over deeper futures of pure noise, or are sufficed by pure imitation of previous schools, Melt Banana escape the iterative postures and procedures of guitar punk to explore intriguing and, by the standards of the day, novel sound spaces.

## MERZBOW & PAN SONIC

VICTO CD/LP BY WILL MONTGOMERY

Whenever a third has been added to the core Vano/Vasanan duo, Pan Sonic's music has often drifted out of focus. Their album with Aias Vago was a dreary step away from the fierce clarity of their own conception, and their longstanding occasional trio with PM Enhet has tended to sink into dull and blunder. Performing with Bruce Gilbert, they have been no more successful.

However, this live collaboration from last year's *Victronics* festival suggests that, with a bit of time in the studio, Merzbow and Pan Sonic might

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come up with music that could tear itself off Stratus of V-century promise as much as it is, though, it's only intermittently successful. This is hardly surprising, given the definiteness of the soundtracks that these musicians have established. Less of a "document" was required, perhaps. Something more alive than "live" might have transpired if the recording had been handed back to the performers for reworking. The live sound doesn't help—Visconti's percussion suffers in particular in a wobbly and vague mix.

Although Pan Sonic and Mowbaw share a basic desire to explore the physics of sound, Akiva's rendering of shinking nerve endings doesn't always gel with the crisp, liver-quivering punch of Pan Sonic. The musicians fit between productive and unproductive interference and often you feel that any two of these three would have produced a more coherent performance in the great tradition of the superego soundclash, their: less than the sum of its parts.

## MOOR/LEHN/BUTCHER THERMAL

UNSCAUNDS UNO CD

BY JULIAN COLEMAN

Thomas Lehn has radically reclaimed the synthesizer for spontaneity. Exploring the tendency of analogue models of the instrument to betray reasonable expectations, he runs tightropes between control and accident. His collaborators are liable to find themselves on untamed ground, dependent upon their reflexes and tangential emotions. Scaphotel, John Butcher, tempered in the untrodden, has the technical cunning and listening skills to meet the challenge. Lehn poses. This well-matched pair has met previously, in a quartet with drummer Paul Lewens and cellist Alfred Zimmerlin, and in duet on Butcher's CD *Musio On Seven Occasions* (Merisao).

The third party on Thermal is Scottish guitarist Andy Moor, a member since 1990 of anachronistic Detroit rockers The Ex and a founder of anachronistic indie Kieran Reid. Moor's mid-90s duets with Ex guitarist Timm Ex declared their shared taste for free improvising. Timm Ex has more recently explored improvisation further with hardcore personnel such as drummer Ian Benrick and saxophonist Ab Baas. Meanwhile Moor has investigated the electronics field, establishing a notable improvising alliance with real-time sampler Kaffe Matthews.

With Lehn and Butcher, Moor puts in a remarkable performance, pulling no punches with his personal take on electric guitar and navigating a potentially hazardous improvising situation with cool confidence that he often seems to be fleeing. There's a spew of rock attitude in his playing but Moor finesse and inflects it to meet an undefined condition. Lehn and Butcher fare well in this encounter too, bending, extending and adapting what they do without compromising essentials. Thermal makes horizons and welds disparate trajectories. It's a highly persuasive point of access to the work of all three musicians.

## p-ZIQ BILLOUS PATHS

PLANET M 20070 CD

BY MARTIN LONGLEY

Four of these tracks have already appeared on 12", but the Worcester-based Mike Paradinas

has re-mixed, edited or otherwise tweaked all of these, keeping alive the spirit of frantic breakbeats and poverised new synth lines. Distant voices call his name on the opening "Johnny Mashed", amidst the crowded detail of its hot-beatled, fatulent funk. Sizzling beats are still in fashion for "Marnell", and remain so for the duration of the disc. Paradinas works his extreme collage of shrapnel, then proceeds to dismantle their makings at high speed, a twitchy, jittery jumble. All of edgily stop-starts "Slings Of Antichrist" opens with a percussive bang, like a gigantic hammer beater smother, then "Ochologopod" features a tiny pseudo horn section, stabbing lines through its gas emission textures. Paradinas has the knack of throwing in some extreme nuptial effects, but still has a way with a melodic refrain, even if it's often cut into frayed ribbons. Mike Dylehouse provides vocals for "On/Off", mixing in real-time take-ups, breathlessly acrobatic as he weaves take-ups these parties off, again and again. "Silk Ties" drifts through a fairly nice, all-naming bass crash and confused drumshots. Paradinas reaches his peak duet, "Grave Nut Beats", a manic high-speed starter, an exhilarating cacophony indeed. Then, there's a calming choral pulse on the last two numbers, taking things down to a more thoughtful level. After all that's passed before, this tactic is equally unsettling.

## TISZIU MUÑOZ DIVINE RADIANCE

FOM 50705 CD

BY BRIAN MORTON

Like Django Reinhardt, this remarkable New Yorker—say it "tee-see-ye moon-ye"—had to overcome a crippling hand injury to master the guitar. At the age of five, Muñoz permanently damaged nerves in his left wrist, but despite the handicap or perhaps because of it, mastered ecstatic drumming and later the guitar. His musical associations began with Mongo Santamaria and later with friends of Santamaria's, admirers John Coltrane. Among the players on this new album are the saxophone's son Ravi, Pharoah Sanders and Rashied Ali, along with bassists Cool McBee and Don Peato, and keyboard master Paul Shaffer, who is perhaps the guitarist's most intimate collaborator.

The music, as on earlier albums *Presence Of Truth*, *Presence Of Joy*, *Presence Of Mystery* and *Death Is A Friend Of Mine*, is intensely mystical. The brief prologue "Presence Of Truth" leads into a long and amorphous psychodrama of life and beyond a planet Earth believes he is visiting only Jesus. Sanders and Ravi Coltrane have both established as funkier and more atmospheric mages, and these colour the performance strongly. Timmed basses, drums and guitar create a swooping sonic vehicle that has the anomalous characteristics of both divine chant and stealth bomber.

"Initiation By Fire" is equally long but more impressionistic in concept. Muñoz occasionally sounds like fusion-pend Larry Coryell, but Carlos Santana's collaborations with both John McLaughlin and Alce Coltrane are perhaps closer to the mark. "Thunder" is a brother and sister and the closest thing on the set to straight modern jazz. If straight modern jazz were to get religion and join a pioneer colony bound for the

outer reaches. As with previous Muñoz albums, the whole conception unfolds on the long piece, which is nearly 25 minutes in length. The basic conception is similar to Train's *Interstellar Space* with Rashied Ali, except here the main cast is guitar and keyboards, with the horns and other instruments acting as minor celebrants in an elaborate sonic ritual.

Mostly respectful with fellow musicians is devoted to none, but he is a difficult artist to engage with. Listening to Divine Radiance is somewhat like conversing on some ecstatic encounter in which parts and litany are familiar enough to giggle through, though not intended for any wider constituency. The atmosphere is relaxed but exclusive, the approach ultimately off-putting.

## TOSHIMARU NAKAMURA NO-INPUT MIXING BOARD [3]

ALCOHOLIC ADULT CD

BY BRIAN MARLEY

When playing solo, Toshimaru Nakamura is inclined to use his two outward digital delay units to loop and refract the basic sounds from his no-input mixing board. This is especially true of his 2002 Cubic Music release *Vehicle*, on which starkly decorated beats dance on and on without apparent human agency. Apart from the beef and emphatic "Nimbo #24", and "Nimbo #26"—which through its systems make reinvented by insects—on *No-Input Mixing Board* [3] less emphasis is placed on electronically precise rhythmic activity while some, low-key effects and improvisational flax are for mere apparition.

The first sound heard is a sizzling tape, like a cheap sulphur match being struck on a microphone, variations of which occur at intervals throughout the CD, often after a period of silence, to mark the start of a new event. As for the silences themselves, they're always judiciously weighed. Nakamura gives us plenty of them on the final track, "Present #03 (Nimbo #27)", a marvel of economy and restraint. The music is much closer to a spiritual soundscapes at the Spital in London, as well as the beautifully paced cantata "Nimbo #25".

## NIIPLETS

### THE LECTURE HALL BOOGIE

HOREN MIMORI 4027

BY DAVID KEENEAN

The third album from Niiplets, the current concern of ex-Les Rallies Derudas bassist and Japanese pin-ball boss master Haruki Nari, is an enduring slice of psych-freaky string rock, shot through with horns recorded 12-bar jazz. Haruki Nari's first and penultimate picked somewhere between early Orange Juice and The Verve Personalities at their most posy.

The opener is a split for an unmixed Dyks truck once *Piano Waves*, with guitarist Zin cutting loose with the same kind of whyn'ty, switchblade form that Robbie Robertson turned on for Dylan's 1974 opus. As Nari barks and rolls his vocals around his throat while the rhythmic section lets it sag with the elastic garage stomp that yielded 1000 teenage punk combos horns denied, Zin's howling guitar style illuminates one the most genuine of musical excesses, flipping between heaving bursts of fuzztone and epic beats of wild mangling.

The vocals are all sung in Japanese, though

Nor is so engrossed in his phoning that you barely notice, and throughout there are weird overblown vocals where might be running some kind of alternative commentary on the proceedings, like when he breaks into a snore during a particularly gassy — but nonetheless extremely satisfying — acoustic blues run. Although much of the later material feels like filler, it's all so indolently drenched with his slightly damaged personality that it sounds as if they, lying together like even the buffiest breakdown feels weirdly relaxing.

## PEOPLE LIKE US/WOBBLY/ WATMOS

WIDE OPEN SPACES  
TIGERBERRY MEMORIES CD

BY CLIVE BELL

Cowboys clear their throats repeatedly, a pedal steel guitar mimics the American Western frontier, a cock crows and we're off down that knee-deep sampling trail. Is it that country yodelling or an African yodel, or both? Now we're being invited to "tad out on the catch for a spell" by a voice slithered in G&W cheese. Saddle up, plunderphonic partners, we got whistling, easygoing rhythms, mules being advised to giddaling, "Golevels" played on the saw, and a cowboy calling "Hey Bes, how about Ponderosa?" more times than you need.

The collaboration between Vicki Bennett (People Like Us), David Danieil and MC Schmidt (Watmos) and Jon Linderoed (Woobly) is actually a recording of a live show at San Francisco last October. For a more G&W satire, part of sampling goulash, it's gnomish, smarmy, restless and maybe a tad confused.

about what it's trying to achieve. Certainly the collaboration doesn't suit Bennett, who works better when exploring an idea at length by herself. It's as if everyone is holding back so as to keep out of each other's way, and you wait for the artists to get stuck into something. Constantly verging on the entertaining, the music suddenly remembers its digital art. Sadly the result is a lack of tracks you might want to hear more than once.

Still, it's intriguing to hear cutting-edge artists tackle sentimental myths of the Wild West as the US strides into the wide open spaces of the Middle East. The gorgeous finale features some ghostly old-time singing, "The place where I worship is the wide open spaces built by the hand of the Lord". The album is not so much a love letter to cowboy movies, more a case of taking a laptop and entering it sideways up the ass of America's sleazy low after with itself.

## GLENN PHILLIPS

ANGEL SPARKS

GAFF MUSIC GMS45 CD

## GLENN PHILLIPS & HENRY KAISER

GUITAR PARTY

GAFF MUSIC GMS10133 CD

BY BEN WATSON

In the late 60s Glenn Phillips played guitar in the Hampton Green band from Atlanta, Georgia. He resurfaces here courtesy of leading international guitar diffusers Henry Kaiser in the 80s. Kaiser invited Phillips to play on a version of The Grateful Dead's "Dark Star" and on the title track of *If I Was 9*, a Jimi Hendrix tribute CD, with The Dead's Bob Weir on vocals. Guitar Party revives a

jam band! Kaiser ran in the late 80s.

The idea of jam bands is alien to British listeners, so much so that their blend of feedback mania, improvisation, politics and soft drugs is well right inconceivable. It's hard to diss an artist who writes movingly of wailing his dying mother, but in the cold light of guitar, it must be confessed that Glenn Phillips' music is not very good. Angel Sparks is flawed by a tiny studio sound which undermines the harmonic banality of the music "sebsful" Country and by numbers World Beat. Although Kaiser's commitment to Phillips' playing is obvious, you scratch your head trying to hear what Kaiser hears. The guitar sound is thin and weedy, and though an all-instrumental album might sound like a good idea, Phillips is no Bill Frisell, and hasn't the sustained concentration or focus to play convincing solos. One suspects that nostalgia is now testing Kaiser's judgment.

The album with Kaiser highlights their stylistic differences. Phillips is a "less the sky" 60s guitarist, Capton-like, always melodic, whereas Kaiser has the cold, hi-tech sound of guitars who came in the wake of Van Halen — where lightning catches anyone the players to forget that notes only signify in their relationship to the backing. Mark McGuire Crawford is a better drummer than John Bossema, which saves the music from the embarrassing banality of Angel Sparks, but they were subjected to a string of dodgy vocalists. Susan Kerner has since "disappeared" from Kaiser's orbit — she cannot be found on the Internet, ergo she does not exist. Shame, because she contributes the one worthwhile vocal, a quark, cracked, homedade-

ness and gals voice in the manner of Jon Mitchell. The other singers — Greg Gumbel, Denny Camarano and Bob Weir — scrape the some-bent of Country rock, hippy sentimentalists who think they can save Country gruelies without taking life and limo. All in all, a grim listen.

## HENRI POUSSEUR/VARIOUS 4 PARABOLIC MIXES

BLUR RSCA 947146 2XCD

BY BRIAN MORTON

In 1972, Belgian composer Henri Pousseur created a series of 8 *Études Paraboliques* at the WDR studios in Cologne. Having issued some wonderfully poetic Pousseur compositions in recent years, and having explored the idea of "serpentine blend" and what they rather chemically call "transcultural attitudes", Seb Rose commissioned a sequence of new "mixes" of the original piece to be performed in November 2001 at the Festival de Wallonie-Bruxelles Festival. The idea was to ask musicians of very different generations and temperaments to make a live mix based on Pousseur's eight "parabolic" studies.

The results are electrifying and a total vindication of Pousseur's quietly understated aesthetic. The first mix is a digital rendering of the original by the composer himself. It is relatively quiet and delicate, concentrating on architectural shapes like the sound portraits of his beloved Liège (though Pousseur was actually born in Malmédy in 1929). The first mix analogue makes no difference to the warmth of the sound, which is grainily moving.

The second mix was undertaken by Robert

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Harpison, in the presence of the composer. Harpison is a brilliant student of the history of electronic music, and his realization is as much a history lesson as it is homage to Pousseur and his ideas. But the highlight of the set is Philip Jeck's radical reinvention, a powerful and at times shattering performance of cathedral proportions, all of it realized on relatively simple tools. This is the piece that takes most liberties with the original material while respecting its premises.

In keeping with Pousseur's instructions, Jeck introduces other sonic material, but does so with impeccable taste. Not so the final mix by David Marlow. Pousseur, like the only "parabolic mix" that does not feel true to spirit of the original, to the extent that it is about process and line rather than sound masses. Pousseur is a formidable musician, with an obvious grasp of Pousseur's lineage, but he has produced only a dish and uninviting reaction to the material.

It is probably best to treat these four works as entirely discrete pieces. Pousseur's work is always in flux and always specific to places and events. Harpison's modest vision adds a footnote, while Jeck's brilliant realization takes it into new dimension. None as would be, their involvement may bring Pousseur to the attention of many more listeners than he has already garnered in his nearly 70 years. Time, surely, for a major retrospective and reassessment program.

## PRELUSE 73 EXTINGUISHED: OUTTAKES

WARP 164 CD  
BY DAVID STRUBBS

Subtitled *Alternate Takes And Beats From One Week Extinguished*, *Extinguished* is considered by its maker Scott Herren as PrePulse 73 to be superior to the recent album from which this is ostensibly a batch of outtakes. Which makes a sort of sense, as PrePulse 73 is all about a perpetual process of discarding. Here, as on the original album released earlier this year, is another dizzying collage of jazz loops, squeezed-out funk basslines, DJ Shadow-style chamber Hip-hop and beautifully poignant breakbeats, each muted in childhood by electronic or analog chaffophony; Rare Grooves made extinct as they're cut short in their prime. The slightly more acclimated piece at which this occurs on *Extinguished* does indeed make for a slightly more exhilarating listen.

"The 70s is the music everyone wants now," states a sampled interview on "Suite For The Way Things Change": "Everyone wants the same music that was recorded already." That remark speaks directly to PrePulse 73's music, which despite its ostensibly radical methodology is, like a lot of music these days, profoundly, tirelessly nostalgic. The preponderance of electronic keyboards, DJ School grooves and scratches, the hints of stand-up bass on "Vikings Inside The Mediterranean But Don't Leave," fragments of ancient noise transmissions like "We Into 99" and grumpy, old-brotherly distressed textures on, say, "Dionne [sic] Takes Over Time" all amount to a frantic, Pousseur search for the Perfect Beat Of Things Past, the search taking place amid the mental drizzle of yesterday, in which all manner of possible beats and beats go by, as Homer ruminates and Zappa.

Of course, the awfully weirdo Zappa-like titles slipped on these pieces ("Tel Aviv's Great

Icecream") suggest that attaching words to this music is a futile and meaningless process, and that perhaps Heron's agenda is more an exercise in narrative subversion, a rapid-fire exercise in postmodernism. Whatever he's about, you do wonder what convulsions in popular music might be wrought if PrePulse 73's energy were harnessed and used to meet overground revolutionary ends. In the meantime, for better or for worse, he remains 'n't so sweet.

## REC CAR PAINT CHEME WARP 164 CD BY DAVID STRUBBS

Rec's Damien Hems, the sort of musical creature not untypical of Warp, who got his start through working with Norman Cook in Brighton. His artwork and Website both receive double looks for signs of this art awareness, and his slow-motion to Car Paint Scheme suggest a similar outlook to Warp's earlier artists. And in his consideration of the relationship between music and past/present/future ("What is a record but just a record of moments passed?") All seems present and correct, just show the scratches and let it flow. Unfortunately, Car Paint Scheme is largely a letdown.

"Rusted Scratches," the opener, is promising enough in its build-up, but as "Working Line" and "Minor Beats" soon depressingly establish, Hems has a predilection for the sort of bay, heavy, Tricase 80s Hip-hop beats which at the time sounded only minimal but in a 21st century context sound more like someone knocking up a garden shed.

These pieces don't really grow or enmesh on you, never they slush and gutter, sultry and purposeless. Beats slide away on downward diagonals, textures are applied desultorily and with what almost seems like deliberate incoherence. Little Karibean aches add to a general air of mindless pastiche. It all feels a bit sparse and heavy duty, too much of a penance to listen to. Matters are scarcely relieved by "Style Mentor," written with Jai Eas, which is real my workshop jam - "I'm popping through the galaxy to recharge my battery" - the dank atmosphere of which elicits a low groan.

There are occasionally redemptive moments: the Moog excursions of "Cosmic Elements" manage to borrow somewhere interesting, while "Soft Plot" and its reverberating waves of Piccan rhythms comes on and on like sheets of rain, with the odd, much needed thunderbolt thrown in. Here, it's really only something, relieved by the boom idly going for all along it's not much, but enough to make you want to check him out next time.

## JON ROSE & HOLLE TAYLOR GREAT FENCES OF AUSTRALIA DYNAMIC HOUSE NO NUMBER CD BY TOM PERCHARD

Jon Rose is an Australian violinist with a disrespectful love for his instrument and its musical habitats, fond of appending it with electronics, power tools and the like. Here, with fellow violinist Holle Taylor, he abandons the instrument entirely (but keeps the bow) in order to engage in a little long string music. Composed from Alan Lurie to Ellen Fiolman, here investigated the complex resonance and

overtones seems that long strings give off, and, of course, the larger the string, the richer its sonic properties. So in stracking Australia's \$309 km Dringo Fence with violin bows, cello bows and drum sticks, Rose and Taylor are dealing with a serious resource. The work is a sort of precedent in Alan Lurie's late 80s/early 90s recordings of contact mixed outdoor telegraph wires, and in the work of Australian environmental sound artists Bill Fontana and Bob Bards.

Visiting every state in Australia to play and record waves of the country's millions of kilometers of fencing, Rose's project is as rich in metaphor as it is in sonic complexity. The violinist writes that the 19th century divide of wilderness into enclosed zones helped destroy the nomadic, indigenous Australian way of life, and in appropriating fences for inappropriate artistic use, Rose and Taylor are obviously operating in a metaphorically rich boundary area of cultural difference, history and environmentalism. But they also articulate a certain Australian nationalism through their sincerely exuberant celebration of the country. And, despite its absurdity, Rose denies any "white folk's irony" in the project. This is, he writes, "Australian landscape sounding its recent history".

Each of the 25 tracks reveals the sonic properties of different fences and locations. Some sound spectral, some earthy, but best of all is the presumably risky performance on the electric fence at Lake George, which leads back a loop of glitches and clicks. Those who like a little tutanus with their music will be pleased to learn the CD pack comes with a section of authentic, rusty barbed wire.

## DJ CHEB I SABBAH AS FAR AS: A DJ MIX SIX DECIBELS 65391093 CD BY MARLIN LONGLEY

The Algerian-born San Francisco's first official DJ mix has undoubtedly been a full-on layered collage of a carefully compiled Jewish to Arab mix. With certainty, it's telling. Judeo-Harvin in terms of structure, sculpted, rearranged and applied complexity. It's more as if Sabbath has nonchalantly led through his string, slipping out a three-day programme of contrasting material that opens in India, travels across North Africa, then wanders down to Mali and Guinea.

Only three tracks are directly named by the Cheb, and he doesn't appear to have interfered with the remainder in terms of layering, beat-mapping or general musical shaping. This actually provides a kind of strength, as the opening acts by Solace and Nayna Akhtar are deceptively subtle, saving Asan Dub Foundation's "Color Use" for the first blow, but then skirting straight back into the tranquility of Paul Horn's "Agua". Natalie Atlas provides another aching pulse, which burms from Egypt to Turkey with the rapturous "Sala", by Mokote. Then, Gnawa Impulse's "Lahilab Express" is given a drum 'n' bass twist, but jumps into Mick Carter's "Wave We Lost Our Dream" to invoke cutting feedback. Sufi Killa's "Someday" (with Sebouh Bambaro's "Sirokan") with its per guitars, sweeping strings and cheery female duos, but then Don Cherry transports the music to another calming

meditation zone, ending on a busy beat. It's a thin line between engaging diversity and unbroken indecision, but perhaps the mix would fare better if it was simply woven as a very personal car stereo compilation.

## SACK UND BLUMM KIND KIND TOSCA RECORDS 40 CD BY MATTHEW

The punning of dry conches, muted trumpet puffs, plucked riffs and pat patterning beats in faux tribal rhythms - such is the world that emerges in the Impulse record packages which Sack and Blumm bat back and forth to each other between Berlin and Cologne. Now in its fourth year, there'd be little sense in trying to tease this sonic collage apart into its component personalities. However, you might surmise that Frank Schätzig-Baum is responsible for loops and rhythms, while the more waxy/horny Hank "Sack" Ziegler contributes a toy world ambience and love of childish language.

The title track, which translates as "Child Child", depicts a fragment of a child's syllable "Da... I'm eating a pine loop, horns, rainmakers and a slowly turning music box. "Be Go to" overlays the haughty but soulful words "dream on" with another delicate form arrangement and plucked guitar strings that tumble together haphazardly in a percussive rhythm, while in "Baby Bad Bay" the horns glide in harmony against the friendly clucking of a trombone, and a husky "bach". The record of sound is riddled so much for children, but as a makeshift space for renegade adults.

And yet the collaboration has a certain ballet beyond the merely quirky. At their best, some tracks evoke the instrumental lines of Tom Waits circa *Rain Dogs*. Curiously they have that same blend of exotic punishment and timber tapping beats with downbeat-style instrumentation, particularly the horn accompaniments. "Mata Minu" sets a tune on a wheezing organ against against plucked rhythms and a gong-like bass line, and a dissonant but then Waldo's Corandabo, but a similar absorbing melody grows out of a few sparse materials on *Kind Kind*.

There's nothing anarchic or edgily here. The intersection of the primitive and the childish - such a recurrent and explosive manifesto in 20th century culture - here results in at most a corioli dance, a mosaic of gentle whimsical things, its combination of the melodic with the downbeat producing a characteristically mournful overtone. Paradoxical, but it's there. However, others might surmise that Sack and Blumm's benign horns, gently plucked strings and unassuming tubas are so noticeably oriented from 1960s wackage that they secretly pay a constant tribute to it.

## SCANNER & STEPHEN VITELLO SCANNER & STEPHEN VITELLO ALCOHOLIC 4587 CD BY OWEN STODOLSKY

Scanner aka Rob Rimbaut collaborates here with fellow musician and media artist Stephen Vitello for two extended pieces. The first, entitled "Somewhere Between Sebouh Bambaro's 'Sirokan'" with its per guitars, sweeping strings and cheery female duos, but then Don Cherry transports the music to another calming







# The Boomerang

New reissues: rated on the rebound

Death and the maiden: Shirley & Dolly Collins

There are plenty of English folk recordings that lend credence to the argument that it is cozy, insular, nostalgic music. The key works of the genre, however, take musical risks and address difficult issues and when a great voice is involved the result can be haunting. **Shirley & Dolly Collins: Love, Death & The Lady** (Floodgates FLE03039 CD) illustrates this perfectly. Originally released in 1970 on the progressive Harvest label, some of the time to Pink Riley, Eddie Broughton, Kevin Ayers and the Third Ear Band, Love, Death & The Lady features not only Portogruet drummer Terry Cox but also a posse of Early Music specialists, including harpsichordist Christopher Hogwood.

Later to form the Academy Of Ancient Music, Dolly Collins, who died in 1995, had studied composition and her imaginative and finely nuanced arrangements are still fresh and revealing. The sepiatone sound of her pipe-organ is a vital ingredient, but it's the voice of her sister Shirley that transforms these songs from black lamentation to sublimine communication. De first encounter Shirley Collins may sound warm and vulnerable, with repeated listening the strength and dignity of the delivery grow and more evident. "I understood the songs and I think my instinct with the songs was better than anybody else's," she told Mike Barnes in *The Wire* 218. She sang from within the material, breathing spirit for traditional songs over as she gave them new life. Look no further than her stunning "Plains Of Waterloo," which concluded the original album. On the reissue it's followed by four additional tracks from the same great sessions - Love, Death & The Lady endures as one of the crowning videobabies of the English folk revival. (A-)

**Beat Happening's Music Is Cheap** (The Apple Trees BYR KUP109 CD/LP) compiles songs recorded from the Olympia, Washington based group's inception in 1983 to their most recent single, released in 2000. Originally included in last year's seven CD box set *Crushing Through*, it collects material long out of print from 45s and cassettes. "I like my rock and roll noisy and wild, with a good tune you can whistle now and then." Beat Happening vocalist and K Records founder Calvin Johnson once proclaimed. This has long been the ethos of Beat Happening, which also consists of members Bart Welford and Heather Lewis. Democratically rotating vocal, guitar and drum duties between members while jettisoning bass altogether, Beat Happening's songs are stippled of superlative acron and stonily codified in form. Johnson's deep, sincere tones and Lewis' pretty, uplifting melodies are set to brittle and minimal rhythms. This unorthodox and raw sound, combined with their fiercely self-reliant attitude

with the music industry, has made them leading exponents of the uncombed DIY movement.

Highlights of this unadorned and tightly threaded journey into Beat Happening's past include the original 45 version of "Wacky Sin", which was rerecorded for the group's third album *Drum* (1991), and opening track "Angel Gums" which, alongside The Dumps-infused "Zombie Limbo Time", was rerecorded in 2000 and shows the group at its spontaneous best. (A-)

Recorded in 1968 and scheduled for release on the major label Sire, the untimely debut from **The Michael Yarker Band**, *Micromanure Love* (Sub Pop ADVSP508 CD), never saw the light of day until 2002, when the Dry Distill label decided to issue it as a limited vinyl-only release. This was instantly snapped up by those who were drawn to the group's avant rock fueled sound mix of early Pure Blue, The Stooges and The Graces, and had heard of the record's legendary story. Manically it may have been saved from slipping back into obscurity by famed Seattle label Sub Pop (home of Nirvana, Earth and 17), who have released a CD version that will yet tempt those aware of the mighty MIB to give them a listen. Made up of Yarker on guitar and vocals, brother Jim Yarker on drums and bass player Tom Welford, their sound is raw, raped and ragged with more than a hint of psychotic psychotic echo thrown in for good measure. The effect is akin to listening to some long lost musical artifact that pulses between the past, the present and the future. Like the Kinks on manure and boiling over with the sort of symbolic urgency that Sonic Youth (or even Grand Funk!) are capable of producing the next. Yarker's Bryan Ferry-like vocal howls and swoops like a deranged owl. This is a crust that could easily, and deservedly, attain something more than cult status. (EP)

Originally released on a vinyl LP that was the colour of an exotic poisonous amphibian, **Morchee's** *Flag* (Misantropic Archives MRA004 2XCD) is now being expanded into a double disc set that takes the original disc to its very limit. The first disc is the same as the LP while the bonus disc features a further 56 minutes of some couched and white noise swamp wading, complete with an enhanced CD-ROM video/screencast that purports to show Allah's wild life noise onslaught in your eye with a vengeance. While the full extent of the project, was clearly laid out on the original LP version, this somewhat elaborate extension allows Morchee a little more room to feed the rapturously sampled into his creation, as he turns the flag, chorusing all the way up and sets the controls for total meltdown mode. (EP)

**Paul Blei Tyle's** *Closer* (Abrams/ESP-Disk

ESP1021 CD) was recorded in December 1965, 12 years earlier, the phenomenal pianist Blei's first album had featured Charles Mingus on bass and Art Blakey on drums. 30 years later he was working with bassist Barre Phillips and saxophonist Evan Parker. Blei has had an extraordinary musical life, with many high points, and his second ESP album *Closer*, with drummer Barry Altschul and bassist Steve Swallow, is one of the peak, tie pieces, as written by each of the three. Each by Paul Blei, Arnette Pascoe and Ornette Coleman, with only Carla's "Batteries" stretched to more than three minutes. Blei's chording often sounds clipped, his right hand statements terse. Yet with this economy of means comes an abundance of melodic, rhythmic and harmonic invention and Swallow and Altschul are perfectly attuned to the unprinted details and other surprises swirling continually from the restraint. One of the irresistible piano albums. (A-)

**Don Cherry** took his music as his province and found none more than through it. *My Second Art* (Sunspots SP01544 CD), recorded in Paris in 1969 with drummer Ed Blackwell, is a wonderful display of that musical wonderlust, which couldn't be contained by studio walls. Cherry draws pentatonic melodies and folk wailing from bamboo and ledon flutes, engages in stark volleys, moves to piano to express affinity with South African pianist Abdullah Ibrahim (then Dollar Brand), and to peckier trumpet for rapid streams of free jazz fire. Blackwell is magnificent, demonstrating extraordinary rhythmic ingenuity, subtly accentuating melodies and varying the music's colour. He was nearly heart to better effect on record. Arguably more so after any album Cherry made. My conveys his understanding of freedom, an understanding that was more expansive and has proven more influential in the long term than the pressured sense of free playing expounded by many of his contemporaries. (A-)

Four pieces by that liberatory and inspirational drummer **Sunny Murray** make up *An Even Break* (Never Give A Sucker) (Sunspots SP01540 CD), recorded in Paris in 1969. Murray's playing manages to sounds oceanic and slanting at the same time; riding symbols like a limitless roll of wave crests, while simultaneously marking out desirable channels for his quartet to digest each theme, churn it and pour. Bistotist on this occasion was Moloch Favors from The Art Ensemble Of Chicago, replacing the injured Alan Shaw. Reads and Favors were in the hands of strong American tenor Kenneth Thorpe and Band Lancaster, known as 'The Thunderbird', an associate of both Wilson Pickett and Sun Ra and

a distinctive voice on alto and soprano. The title track appears, with Murray showing himself an accomplished reader of his own poetry. His reading sets an emotional register that the horns sustain throughout the album, the centre holding firm while the extremities of their blowing lash out dangerously. (A-)

A single 30 minute track, "Hunt", unfolds on **Artie Shepp And The Full Moon Ensemble's** *Live At Arches* (Vol 2) (Sunspots SP01538 CD), recorded at the Arches Jazz Festival in July 1970. Accompanied by a French rhythm section of bassist Bob Guerin and drummer Claude Deloie and flumes of flutist from guitarist Joseph Deyan, Shepp takes for a long time into a funky piano groove, alternating obsessive repetition and episodic rhapsodies. Clifford Thornton supplies joyful nasal solos on the shero, an Indian oboe-like instrument, and elsewhere stretches out on valve trombone. Alan Shorter, elder brother of Wayne, nudges the flugelhorn out of its customary mellow mood into idiosyncratic expressiveness. And after a full half-hour has passed, Shepp takes up his tenor horn and Thornton takes over piano duties and the proceedings acquire greater urgency. His tenor is steeped in Coltrane's technical boldness, but also downhome and growling, and out of it spills a recitation of Shepp's poem "Mama Rose". An event with some diverting phases rather than the consistently enthralling performance you might hope for, but scarcity of musical allowing Thornton or Shorter adds interest to this reissue. (A-)

After the estimable *Twenty Years Of Orchard* box set released last year, label bosses Ian Mackaye and Jeff Nelson seem newly reconciled to their position as both founding fathers and archivists of the DC hardcore scene. With a predictably effusive title, *First Demo Tape* (Orchard ODS140 CD/7") captures **Miser Thrust** - featuring Mackaye on vocals and Nelson on drums - in 1981, dealing with the protocols of a recording studio only three or four months after they'd formed from the ashes of The Rain Cities. There aren't many surprises here, save the cute picture of Miser Thrust scolded and backing vocalist Jeffrey Williams dressed as Minnie Mouse on the sleeve. All eight songs - dispersed with in nine minutes - reappeared on the group's original records, chiefly on the *Miser Thrust EP* recorded a month later. Nevertheless, it remains *Demore* 101: rock 'n' roll propelled by indignation rather than expertise, and with a moral imperative (the infamous "Straight Edge" features here) that first severed ideas of what teenage rebellion should be, then insistently created a new extraordinary thing. (A-) Reviewed by Julian Cowley, Mike Clarke, John Mulvey and Edwin Ponsbury



Kanaka — for the cover, you've been exiled. Their Chirupunk! record 70s glam-rock-by-numbers short hit, "It's Fun-Ga-Qant!", is the opener. Unlike *The Cramps'* delight in rockabilly trash, this kind of garbage recycling expresses collapse self-hatred, an inability to escape error and insecurity, musically, a bad thing.

Y/Vin consistently selects grooves and tracks with nothing to commend them but half an idea: murky, a pop tune, sample a 50s sex-education record, make "Icky Ducky" over more boring than the original, speed up the vocal, make the CD player sound like its skipping. Despite the bluster, the narrow parameters of chart pop are again and again enforced, but as formalist droneness, lacking the vocal sanctity or naive enthusiasm which makes for inspiring pop. After being tormented by the surrounding pop drivel, Y/Vin's various bands of random noise sound almost refreshing (a track powered by Lou Reed), but the violence is vicious, digital, hollow. Sir Augustus Rehears "The Must Be Hawaiian Love" shows how far behind Manchester's *Stink*, Haugen & Wolkstein everyone is in "language." Two bright moments in a grim two hours: tracks by Soljago, who think musically outside the rooming heartbeat of chart pop and digital noise, and Cook ESP's "Pena-Awa" whose noise bits is jarringly beautiful.

## VARIOUS CENTRAL AFRICA: THE ANTHOLOGY OF THE AKA PYGMIES

OCORA 080117173 CD

BY RICHARD HENDERSON

French-Israeli ethnologist Benja Arose's recordings of Pygmy music rank alongside those of iconoclast anthropologist Colin Turnbull for quality and subsequent influence. Arose lived with different nomadic groups in the rainforests of the Central African Republic, among them the Babenzeli and the Aka peoples. His recordings of Aka performances were first available in the late 70s as a type LP set. In their second edition, the CD, these rarest tapes are now deemed previously heard only by Aka: the complex polyphony of Aka singers interweaving against the forest canopy, the rattling of raffia-constructed dances evoking a campfire; children's rhythmic boozies near a microphone; the intrusion between Pygmy vocals and the monotonous, long-chain melodies of surrounding insects.

Though often characterized as a band of merry stoners meeting in prehistoric bliss, the index of mortality and mortality ran high in Pygmy life. An especially memorable vocal wail is conceived by a village mourning the death of a local dweller; who overdosed on forest hallucinogens in search of visionary insight. Children sit in stuns are mesmerized in hopes that they "will be healthy and not get shy." Arose's notes detail both the hardship and joys of the Aka in a world where the staples of their existence — bees and wildlife — were already disappearing. Songs composed to attract game have long since become empty, albeit beautiful cultural relics, the animals in question having largely disappeared at the hand of poachers.

Even ethnomusicologists would tell you that the music of Aka's Pygmies has been over-estimated. Still, the ingenuity and unearthly beauty of Pygmy melody is undeniable, and file

with alluring contradictions. The music theory esoused by these minimalist dances has remained unchanged through millennia, as has their preference for complex vocal polyphony abetted by percussion and elementary woodwinds. Yet Aka singers admit to a heretofore of sin, incorporating still more intricate melodic inventions with each performance of a tribal festival. The Aka incline confidence over in their breathy performances, though frequently silent in stunts, enjoy listening to the songs accompanying Manoli, their ritual dance in preparation for hunting, should have no difficulty imagining these dancers bringing down an elephant, if only they could still find one.

## IANNIS XENAKIS TERRETRKOTHI

EDITION 82 101516 CD

BY PHILIP CLARK

Ever since Iannis Xenakis produced his seminal orchestral work *Metastasis* in 1954, commentators have been fascinated by the elemental forces that exultate from his theories and calculus. *Metastasis* was conceived when Xenakis was working as an assistant to the great French modernist architect Le Corbusier, and transcribes the plunging canals and soaring vistas of his buildings into a rampant sonic mass. The two CD completion of lesser known orchestral and electronic pieces picks up the story with ST 48-1, 240162 (1962). This is an example of Xenakis's stochastic music — his best idea — as widely confused as the 1969 recording of its premiere given by the ORTF Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by American composer Lukas Foss.

Stochastic music was Xenakis's response to the inscrutable mysteries of natural phenomena. Witnessing hundreds of individual birds flocking together to move en masse, or observing how millions of blood cells congregate to form a blood clot, suggested in Xenakis's mind concepts that were later to be formalized as chaos theory. His experiments yielded a computer program based on probability theory that randomly generated notes modified on the movement of mass, rather than the transformation of individual notes.

240162 is the date Xenakis's computer "calculated" the work, and it's a central paradox of his work that such conceptual beginnings led to music of unbridled primal force. Foss's performance is exceptionally well sculpted, allowing the tension between blocks of swirling movement in the orchestra to be experienced with great clarity. But by the time he wrote *Remission* (1965-66) for orchestral woodwinds "scattered throughout the orchestra," Xenakis was already starting to rely heavily on his first intuition. The piece is a dramatic dialogue between gestures "correct" canopies would need to be simple and banal, and writing that spills out over the orchestral frame with elaborate detail.

A sustained union with elaborate through the string section at the outset, and it's held for longer than most composers would desire. The clattering of brass and percussion suddenly overwhelms this opening, and Xenakis has outlined the extremes of tension and paralysis that will power the work. He describes *Remission* as being about the "flow and acceleration of sound particles," and his score arms the percussionists with piano steel whistles that scream above the orchestra during the busiest moments, carrying

the sparring sounds into infinity. Xenakis also requires each orchestral player to play supplementary percussion instruments. This gives his textures rough and shabby edges, and also questions about the relative values of music and noise in today's concert hall.

Remission also proves by placing the musicians in the audience, thereby forcing the orchestral players and the audience to rethink their relationship. Nourias Geras (1967-68) was a similar set-up, though Xenakis's compositional methods have evolved into new areas. He is comfortable enough to talk about the "arbitrary decisions" he made when writing this work, and the dialogue is now between Xenakis's systems and his authorial voice. Nourias Geras defined a new type of orchestral sound. Still, intricate woodwind weaving drifts and hovers around the scale rather than resting on any single note, and this previously untagged sound resource galvanized Michael Finnissy, James Dillon and Richard Rodney Bennett into extending orchestral color. Such chances makes the job of listeners the classical establishment usually demands, and Finnissy in particular made a link between this aspect of Xenakis and the folk music he'd been studying. Xenakis himself had pre-empted this connection, and there's a gruff folk expression to be heard on the final two works on the first disc, *Symos* (1969) and *Aschompos* (1957).

As these orchestral compositions demonstrate, Xenakis's work was in a perpetual state of trying to break free from constraints of being "music." His series of Polytypes made this aspiration explicit: by comparing both with sound and with light. The second disc explores these groundbreaking notions, and contains *Polytype De Montpelier*, *Polytype De Olympe* and *Persopolis*. *Persopolis* is a Polytype in everything but name, and was composed for the Shiraz Festival of Arts and Music in Iran in 1971. It was assembled on eight tape loops, and is described in Nourias Geras's Xenakis biography as an "exceptional artistic celebration capturing the pagan atmosphere of the historic site." Sounding like a collage of pieces of ancient electronics, it is a world away from institutionalized electronic music. That said, Xenakis's orchestral music doesn't sound particularly orchestral either. Whatever Xenakis touched, he turned it into something rich and unique.

## AMI YOSHIDA TIGER THRUSS

IMPROVISED MUSIC FROM JAPAN 1958-60

BY CLIVE BELL

This is an intriguing, beautifully framed album, which puts the tiger under the microscope. As he the size limited pieces of ancient electronics, it is a world away from institutionalized electronic music. That said, Xenakis's orchestral music doesn't sound particularly orchestral either. Whatever Xenakis touched, he turned it into something rich and unique.

Ami Yoshida is a young Japanese vocalist who visited the UK a couple of years ago with her duo Aka. She has recorded twice with Otono Yoshida, notably on his excellent *Cathode*. She herself has described Tiger Thru as a picture dictionary, a category list of the sounds she is

currently able to produce. There are 99 tracks here, many of them short, sharp chunks of vocal sound. Strangely, glottal whistles or air screams, these sounds would normally be barely audible. No preamble, no warnings, we are jelled from one track to the next.

But things are not so simple. Yoshida doesn't deal with voice so much as sound, and is not inclined to make a lovely shuffling sound, gently pulsing. One's first impression of her and his vocalizations are "noise." As literal voices or baritone, and other sound electronic.

Once a little manipulation and looping are applied, she sounds like a whistling kettle, a shortwave radio, or a rainforest full of insects cuning at frogs. Suddenly we enter a baby zone of gurgling and bubbling sibil. Just as we became used to thrills being short and in close-up, we get a full five minutes of distant, repeating sentences. A vocal note is dropped and layered to make a lovely shuffling sound, gently pulsing. One's first impression of her and his vocalizations are "noise." As literal voices or baritone, and other sound electronic.

## YOSHIMI & YUKA FLOWER WITH NO COLOR

BRCCAC 10304 CD

BY CHRIS CHAMBER

Yoshimi is Yoshimi P-Me, of *Boredoms*, Free Kitan, *OKO*, *Savoy* and the title of the most obscure Flaming Lips album, *Yaka & Yaka*. Yoshimi & Yuka. The two met when Yuka went to see *Boredoms* play at CBGBs back in 1993, but this delicate collaboration couldn't be further removed from the glare of the Lower East Side's alternative rock scene.

*Flower With No Color* is the product of the two days this time last year that Yoshimi and Yuka spent diving under Mount Itsumi (in Japan's Izu Islands) to record a series of tracks with musical instruments they recorded in the open air, and at least some of the time in the grounds of a Shinto temple, and the record is alive with the environmental sounds that the microphones inevitably picked up: breaking wind, insect calls. A few days later they took the tapes to a studio and applied the gentlest selection of overdubs and effects, enough to ensure an appealing variety of texture, but not enough to disrupt the intuitive balance of the original performances.

Vocal is a mess, switching between little high yells and harmonious, high-held lines. There's no sense of urgency, but the mood of deeply absorbed capricious and serious playfulness doesn't waver as one piece meanders into the next. "Wow Desk In Eye" is the record's sprawling 27 minute centerpiece which, despite its apocryphal, manages to suggest the poised piano compositions of Charles Koechlin, the plaintive patterns of Japanese *Shakuhachi* music, the oceanic progress of *The Necks* and the naive experimentalism of *Barney & Ben Floyd* as it is cinematically through a succession of changes. After *Shin Shiki* and *Shin Shiki* (the two briefest of fragments — a dreamy snapshot of slow-moving liquid chords, which subside into silence almost as soon as it has begun.)

# Avant Rock

Reviewed by Tom Ridge

## **BARDO POND ON THE ELLIPSE**

TRIP-POP CD

Though they have switched labels to All Tomorrow's Parties, Philadelphia's Bardo Pond reiterate their commitment to black hole psychedelia. But their music now allows more room for bludge Solentian-style riffs and the sonic skulge, while the Gibson brothers increasingly interrupt the low flow of their fuzz riffs with acoustic guitar. This greater degree of subtlety, relatively speaking, isn't a progression as such — Bardo Pond so completely inhabit their own universe that each new release is simply a variation on their bedrock style. Even without quite the same levels of monolithic guitar noise, their fuzzy hallucinogenic rock has the slow, devastating inevitability of tectonically shifting faultlines before the earth splits open.

## **BOS O-LAND**

ANGELIKA KOCHLERMANN ARKHY CD

Mixing Gothic cabaret with slowed-down Kosmische grooves, this Austrian trio never quite live up to its initial premise. Over Hammer's sinuous basslines and some subtle electronic shading, vocalist Dore S. croons evocative blues ballads in German or St. Harvey tones. But the consistent slow grind and her mainmains fail to convey the intended sense of menace and decadence. Better moments include the more melodic "We You In My Head," which replaces dominating bass with violin, and the clearly experimental "Rosen Garden 2007," which lays a deconstructed bassline under a raft of some detritus. The CD finally begins to make sense with the lurid electronic of "You" and the sluggish hard rock meltdown of "We Are All Here".

## **BOULDER DASH ALIEN FOLK TRASH**

ANGELIKA KOCHLERMANN ARKHY CD

Guided by J. Hanaik, from French group cDemage, posts a chaotic Bobby Gillespie quote on the inner sleeve of this solo project. But it's hard to see just how his collection of frayed electronic doodles and amorphous songs relates to Gillespie's charge that "rock bands today are fucking lame". Hanaik repeats into his own micro universe, where music both drifts happily co-exist with stroboscopic ballads, short thrives with disorder and a large dollop of raw, raw attitude. He presides all the right buttons. Like he's taking off a shedload of outdoor rock cliché. Friggle vocals, primitive drum machine beats, layers of distortion and varying tape speeds conjure the image of someone lodged in an attic with keyboard, guitar and bed ad.

## **THE ECSTASY OF SAINT THERESA**

SLOWTHINKING

UNRELEASED CD

Over dreamy noise pop wingers, the Czech duo is dismissed down to an essential core of arpeggiated/composer Jan Nuchow and vocalist Katerina Witebska, with input from a shifting pool of auxiliary musicians. Witebska's voice

goes from cool clarity to sly intimacy, evoking both Björk and ex-His Name Is Alive vocalist Kate O'Brien. Displaying chamberlike tendencies, she adapts herself around the songs more than she imposes her personality on them, but with Nuchow's busy electronic textures running not this is probably a good thing. He inserts cackling parts of sound and varying degrees of sonic turbulence into tight sketches, interspersed amid punchy bass and acoustic basslines. His "other noises" sleeve credit vastly understates the process by which he streamlines these sound collages into coherent songs. The only downside is it's a bit too carefully directed: tandem layering adds colour and depth — as if it's following the music instead of driving it.

## **ELUVIUM LAMBENT MATERIAL**

TEMPORARY RESIDENCE TRIP-POP CD

Geiger-based Matthew Cooper picks at the bare bones of composition, tracking a singular course through floating Ambient drapes with guitar, piano and electronics, from the gently undulating drones of "The Unfinished" and the loose melodic progression of "Under the Water It Grows". In the distorted edge of "Zephyr" and "A Shivering Harmer Image". This latter piece aspires to epic minimalism, with a repeated wave of distortion extending into a drone pattern of oceanic monotony. For all its interesting simplicity of intent, Lambent Material covers terrain comprehensively mapped by My Bloody Valentine and Flying Saucer Attack.

## **ESMERINE IF ONLY A SWEET SURRENDER TO THE NIGHTS TO COME**

BE TRUE  
RESONANT RESIST CD

Compiling Bruce Cowdron and Beckie Fenn, the duo Esmerine are an offshoot of the extended Gaidipaul Nubi Black Emperor family. Nearly built on cells and timed percussion, their debut album adoptions the parent group's apocalyptic soundtracks for something that is wide-reaching in scale yet intimate in expression. The celo adopts an almost bluesy tone in some instances, as they work through moods from mournful to frantic. Their instrumentals range from hesitant droplets of noise to swathes of unruly throb. In some instances, they return, the music can also build into formidable blocks of sound. Without recourse to high levels of volume, Esmerine direct their loose streams of music into an unstoppable flow.

## **GEORGE THE MAGIC LANTERN**

MICHAEL DUFFY DUFFY CD

Michael Varty and Suzy Mangon sound partly like Mendelssohn's answer to Lou, but a studied eclecticism permeates their music, pitched somewhere between folk elegance and captured melancholy. Instrumentally, Magic Lantern displays an antiquarian's magpie methodology, with George's vintage sense of ornate broad

occupying the same territory as Piani. However, Suzy Mangon's pure voice cuts through the muggy layer of postmodernism to deliver songs that beautifully capture a sense of spiritual loss through the passing of time itself. Her music's junk shop aesthetic matches primitive electronics and music box tinkling in a style that sometimes veers close to sentimentality, but is rescued in the end by its unassuming charm.

## **GUIDED BY VOICES EARTHQUAKE GLUE**

MADDOCK CLOTHY CD

Under the guise of Guided By Voices, the ever-profiled Robert Pollard is a master of unceremonious strum and jet-propelled power pop. Beneath the warm layer of guitar riffs hanging like a benevolent smog over his cooed songs, verses and choruses megal, disengage and veer off in unexpected directions, as GBV magnify form into abstract shapes. While part of this is forever 1967 — an eternal recreation of *The Who Sell Out* — structurally the music is barely containable, with dense riffs and compressed Prog angles fighting it out between them. These riffs in particular take on a kind of disembodied quality, suspended in their own timeframe, their abstraction matching Pollard's semi-obscure lyrics.

## **LAZARUS**

SONGS FOR AN UNBORN SUN  
TEMPORARY RESIDENCE TRIP-POP CD

San Francisco based musician Trevor Montgomery performs his songs in a near-constant drizzle of a pace to match. His spectral fragments are vapour trails of melancholy, potently played on acoustic guitar, with Montgomery's double-tracked voice providing occasional falsetto harmonies. With every word tortuously wound up in a parched, whispering style, the music threatens to grind to a standstill. Montgomery sounds like he's breathily coming round from the most monumental of hangovers as he greets the world with his withered balladry. The weakness of his level of self-glassing has a certain appeal, and Montgomery has certainly mastered the atmosphere of desolation, but a heavy sense of monotony weighs him down.

## **MOVIEZONE MOVIEZONE**

GEORGIC 11 CD

Originally released on the Planet label in 1995, this release of Moviezone's debut brings a welcome focus back to its Bristol's avant rock scene, partially obscured at the time by Massive Attack's prominence. Moviezone were one of a loose network of groups, including Flying Saucer Attack, Crescent and Amp, which combined pastoral psychedelia with noise pop. Moviezone's songwriting nucleus was Kate Wright and Rachel Brown, with help from Friends' Matt Elliott and Third Eye Crewdon's Matt Elliott, among others. The music extends bluesy-style drone ballads into elliptical, pastoral reveries and homages from jazz squalls. It is dreamlike and sometimes shambolic, with a very private quality that

resonates on a few angles, including the hazy "She Smiled Maudslott Lane", and a more upfront dense version of "Chance Is Her Open".

## **SURFACE OF ECEYON DRAGNY**

STRANGE ATTRACTORS 5AHH014 CD

Including moments of Lurking and Noise Bitch, Surface of Eceyon are a psychedelic Prog project recorded live in the studio. They have created a so-far mythology around the group, casting members as characters such as Seabears, Lyfence and so on. Dragne promises a degree of excess if fails to deliver. Their spacy jams allow for some nice interplay between the three guitars, but they never quite raise the methos. Where they should be blazing off into the stratosphere, they shimmer politely and simmer intermittently. Despite the impressive Jaki Liebert-style drumming of Phil Jenkins, they never transcend their earthbound surroundings.

## **SCOTT TUMA THE RIVER 1 2 3 4**

THUNDERBOLT ALPINE/THUNDERBOLT CD

Tuma was a member of Sealed Air and now plays in Sealed Air Ensemble, and his second solo album echoes the disembodied spontaneity of the latter's recordings. Principally using acoustic guitar, harp and harmonica, his Ambient Americana is hesitant, fragile and desolate, the phantom afterlife of Western music. Individual notes hang in isolation. You can hear the scoping of the guitar strings, while the ghostly whine of the harmonica is so exaggerated that it becomes an unrelenting, alien sound. Tentative, improvisatory workings give way to vague swirls of sound and distant drone, sometimes recalling the Ambient drift of early Laibson as the witness of Scott Tuma's compositions gradually fade into the twilight Mesmerizing.

## **WILLARD GRANT CONSPIRACY**

RECORD THE END  
LOOSE WIRE CD

Like Lambchop's Gettin' Country alter ego, this live collection by Boston-based musicians Robert Fisher and Paul Austin brings underground rock's edginess to bear on raw folk and country themes. But on this release the eclectic side has been tamed down and Austin has taken a back seat, while Fisher applies his deep crouch to a series of songs mostly about death or loss of some description. The music is founded on acoustic guitar and violin, and enlivened by the occasional crunch of electric riffs, but it displays an evenness and consistency throughout. This may explain why the album fails to really engage. By focusing so exclusively on establishing a signature sound, Willard Grant Conspiracy buff the edge off their raw material. Nothing surprises, everything falls too neatly into place. But Jess Wilson and Kevin Wark contribute some fine vocals, and the songs are convincing enough in themselves, but they marred by the group's nagging sense of constraint. □

# Critical Beats

Reviewed by Philip Sherburne

## AKUFEN HAWAIIAN WODKA PARTY

**MUSIQUE CONCRÈTE** (HSCD 0019) 12"  
Akufen, Montreal's maestro of menaproping, is his own term for his method of collageing. Told Edwards-style, hundreds of snippets of melody, percussion and radio-dial swirl into portmanteau wholes. Like a sense Chuck Close — as behind this first disc for Musique Concrète, the new label helmed by himself, Deadbeat, Steve Beaucap and MUTEK's Vince Lemaire, Akufen (aka Marc Leduc) has often flirted with kitsch in his choice of source material, and "Hawaiian Wodka Party" leads even further in that direction. From its perfunctory-populated, cover-influenced cover design to the Hawaiian slide guitar, Pansonic tape accoutrement and Bromide string music. The baggy collage here might be Akufen's most away from his characteristic skip toward an almost disinterested, Cologne Techno beat, but even his sampling style seems to be stratching out, leaving behind the punctuation marks and ellipses of his previous work in favour of a scrapbook approach that's not afraid to quote full phrases — in the case of the third track, generous helpings of accordion and reggae drum fill. "Ae Tamaru" is particularly merrily, wrapping a twisted Techno rhythm around goopy moments of doo-wop like so much rose paper.

## ARK CIRCULUSYARK 2

**AGILEX COMPANY** (CCS000 12")  
Paris is on fire right now, though it's got nothing to do with the famed "French Touch" labels like LaBelle, District and now Circus Company are reintroducing the city as the locus of a new strain of wildly perceptive minimalist techno. Ark, one release partner of Pete Dinklage and known for times on Paris (Géorgie Cabanis), F-Gem and B4, presents five more tracks of robotized funk and serene stunner in his second "Majesty" EP (both singles are collected on one CD "133 3" recalls Thomas Brinkmann in more than just its mathematical title, constructed from snippets of clicks and clatters, it's a piston-driven pinball machine moving full tilt "Archeology" and "Lost And" — a beat-tipping highlight of Ark's A&S/sampler live sets — as the clear highlight, weaving together choppy vocal bursts and robotically snare-pah bass and drums (And is he saying "abstract" or "sacred"? One hopes it's the latter). Perhaps Dinklage's "Sweet Chat" into a spooly what of word-like vocals and death's door knocking, while Isolde turns the same tune into the preposterous version of "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot" over recorded.

## CABO SAN ROQUE VS LUCIANO

**MEMBRILLO EP**  
**BRUCHSCHEIDT** (BRUCHSCHEIDT 12")

## LUCIANO LA MONONADA DE PEPE BOMBILLA

**MENTAL GROOVE** (MG001 12")

Electronic music's pan-Latino movement — comprised of Latin American artists and European

expats challenging the idea of "roots" by nesting like cyborgs in the branches of regional essentialism — continues to develop on the 13th release from Swiss-based Bruchschmidt, sometimes like to Swiss-Latin musician Lucien N. Luciano. On the A-side, Barcelona's Cabo San Roque, an eight-piece group employing mostly homemade instruments, offers two biting tracks — one calypso and the other of uncertain South American provenance — using drum percussion, xylophone, ukulele, and accordion. The calypso's strongly Argentine ambience is the perfect foil for Luciano's reggae, which slots the high end into a spray of riffs and fills reminiscent of his remix of the theme from *Amélie*. Meanwhile, on "La Mononada De Pepe Bombilla" Luciano sets up clattering cymbals and woodblocks that sound like a flea circus scene, stretched out over 13 minutes and peppered by horrendous bass, a distorted monologue and peals of wicked laughter.

## CHATEAU FLIGHT COSMIC RACE

**VERSATILE** (VERSATILE 0004 12")

Is the high and the new frontier of Techno? For a couple of years now, Luciano has been embedding in ethnodance Melchior tracks the irregular rhythms of perfect African (or Afrodescent) "Pocis Like Serenades In A Car," for that matter. Now Chateau Flight does the same in even more marauding fashion. Over a funky omnibus bass grid and constant, electric-inflected drums, a tranquil ribbon of saxophone notes, sassy with delay, undulates like a wading train in a wind tunnel. Eight minutes of ebb and flow spiced by as the drums and those rasping apparatus trade inevitability it's not really Techno, and it sure is to God isn't France, but it's so immersive it can only recall the swamy beauty appeal of Acid and Slinky's early records — although dressed up in the shatter and rebuses of Garage. The most delicately spoken record this year.

## DIZZEE RASCAL THE BOY IN THE CORNER

**XL** (XLCD17 12")

One of the most eagerly anticipated records of the year, *The Boy In The Corner* follows months of speculation about what 16-year-old Dizzee Rascal would do following his first, "1 Lux U," which as soon as it appeared on London protest last year (and after its resampling on *Blackwing* sessions) seemed to showcase UK Garage in its single state. (Indeed, it's a shame that the record loses off Dizzee's single "Weed," in which he announces, patently, "I ain't UK Garage so get used to it.") Angry, witty and bearing new surprises with every bar, the album delivers both lyrically and sonically. At once ramble and drums crackling octaves with every other syllable, Dizzee spins out stories of East London housing estate life, touching on graffiti, teenage pregnancy, and aspiration against all odds. Beyond the realm — a question mark echoing US Midway's grimecore observations — the real influence is *The Boy In The Corner* lies in the details, from the Platinum AS-450000 half-time crawl of tracks like "Sittin' Here" to the use of vocal samples as hard-

knocked percussive jobs. Even Billy Squier makes an appearance, singing "I've got the big beat" over a gargantuan drum track. It sounds like a massive "Kick you" in the Fattys Sims and Chemical Brothers for stowing the spotlight from street music in the mid-90s. But Dizzee isn't so much assuming his place in the line of light as blowing out the balloons one by one.

## HARCO PRONT EPOS

**MUSIC FOR SPREADERS** (MUSSET 12")

Electro-funk's sketchbook long exists after last year's debut with another nine tracks stuffed into a mere 20 minutes. Once again, Pront has popped himself somewhere between Dugout and Trangles, offering delicate analogues flavoured with elephantine low end, finger-snapped high in the mix and drum treatments so dry they've pushed the forest fire warning needles of the dial. The Dutch musician, who plays and programs everything here himself, from congested thirty-note lines to reggae bays guitars to real-life Roland chords that break out just when things get sandy clearly models himself as a kind of Prince, letting his voice swoon, squeak, and serenade — though always run through a barrel of effects. Rhythmically, the EP ranges from the liturgical punch blast of "Brimble" to the cardboard two-step of "Dut" to the Filigree Techno sunrise of "Smile" (one minute and 11 seconds of Ambient heaven). But his sweet spot is the kind of charming, swollen funk that makes you wonder if "Harco Pront" is Dutch for "dry funk".

## LIEBE IST COOL

**LIEBE EP**

**BRUCHSCHEIDT** (BRUCHSCHEIDT 12")

Love is in the air. In the shadow of Berlin's annual state to arouse — or at least state — and corporate-sponsored lovelessness carried out in the name of law — the city, says Peter Elter, aka Liebe Ist Cool, present the story of their love affair as translated into Techno. (The entire relationship, chronologically told, has been chronicled in 11 sequential tracks, of which these four are a selection.) Not nearly as representational (nor frankly pornographic) as Heats & Venetian Snares's recent *Phosphoranthracene* due on Hynote, Liebe Ist Cool's spryly dense tracks howl about to Herbert and Dan Salsano's breathy dramatic portraits on *Around the House*. That non-German speakers probably won't be able to detect the bacchanal behind the beats doesn't make the second less any more intimate. Indeed, to Morokkows's penchant for subtle gestures and inaudible caresses, whistles (one into bubble-necked hi-hats, spooly basslines spin against dubbed bass), and skipping, Garage-inflected rhythms (type between the delicious, perpetual present, and the inevitable future toward which all relationships must tend.

## OCTAGON MAN MAGNETON

**DC RECORDINGS** (DCR 001 12")

Could the world possibly need another electro record? Probably not — which is precisely where Octagon Man, J Seal Karoli (Depth Charge) after

ego, gets his inspiration for *Magnetron*, a record that seems bent on turning electro's skin inside out every chance it gets. Classic electro patterns drop beats, heave nervously and startle all over themselves in their attempt to walk coolly toward the cats, like bumbling thugs who find themselves in a bar crawling with cops. Cover is provided by the army of analogues: irregularities that comprise the disc's mid-range and high end. Normally related to the overhead style of classic Rhythmic releases, the eighth leads on track like "Gonzo" K and "Vader" ladder and pop like fluorescent in a power surge, as the smell of burning ozone suffices every last pocket of air. Even a tune like "All the Happy Robots," with its stark electro trill, a world away from the futuristic fetters of the genre, cooing instead into a pile of screaming keyboards and distorted drum machines on the life. More than kitschily cytopathic, it's positively nihilistic.

## OSBORNE DAYLIGHT

**SPECTRAL** (SPOH 12")

Chicago fanatics will remember Miltlgang's Todd Osborn [sic] for his peacetime "Best Ready To Jam," released last year on Ghostly International's Techno Ambient Spectral (which is quickly threatening to become the output of its parent operation). "Daylight," also featured on Ghostly's kind Versatile compilation, is a textbook Deep House tune built around an enigmatic walking bassline, unvarnished hi-hats, glowing Rhodes riffs, and old school keyboard stabs. That Osborn is also Soundmurderer (of age-longer than Violent Tunes/Rephlex) shouldn't surprise; despite the radically different feel of each project, both suggest an and/or's love affair with disco's forms. Isolde takes a more eclectic approach, drying up the disco on the set hand, and on the other revealing the melody into a sensibility sentimental. As Weather Channel-ready, that wage away as soon as it's emerged from the speakers. Maybe it's afraid of that grumpy, fat-walker bass, meaning like a storm front from the South.

## THE RIP OFF ARTIST

**1/8" JACK**

**VERTICAL FORM** (VFORMS 12")

The Rip Off Artist, Los Angeles' Matt Haines, gets unabashedly deep on two tracks for the generally more sedate Vertical Form. The title track is marked by a delicious sort of rhythmic slippage that separates the drum track from the chords as though they were two separate galleys rubbing back and forth. While the scene and hi-hat lead the percussion section straight to Squaresville, as regular as your clockwork life, a skittering series of chords — shavings of deep, expansive swathes of House ambient — goes sliding off at its own pace. Despite Haines's own history amidst the glitch messive — and the fact that the lyrics have viel sex behind technological obsessions — this is no dodec and auto intervention: It's a full-scale House heaving, so streamlined as Soft Pink Truth. "Double Diamond," sufficed with the same distill of Soundkick and Iwerk, takes the same idea and stuffs it back inside the pe-laced programmer's bag of tricks. □

# Dub

Reviewed by Steve Barker

## AFRICAN HEAD CHARGE SHUNKEN HEAD

**CHARGE SHUNKEN HEAD CD**  
Spanning 23 years of dub-making by probably the most versatile of all On-U Sound's artists, this collection is augmented by two newly recorded tracks that preview a new album scheduled for next year, marking African Head Charge's return to collaboration with Adrian Sherwood. Originally a studio concept picking up from the leads offered by Bill Laswell's vision of electric Africa, and David Byrne and Brian Eno's *My Life in the Bush of Ghosts*, South Londoners AHC soon developed their own unique sonic shapes with a synthesis of dub, reggae, drum and chant. The addition of Alan Lomax's catamenia and other more introtable sound sources all eventually become animated in a live context. One of Albert Einstein's few sampled appearances in popular music comes in the compelling "Language And Mentality," while On-U film buffs will recognise "Fly Away Chant" from the tertius inquis in David Lynch's *Wild At Heart*, even though in the movie's version, Prince far is vocals are slowed to half speed. Newly remastered for this release — remarkably the only currently available Head Charge material — these 15 tracks prove to be the most timeless of On-U Sound productions.

## BARRY BROWN STEPPIN' UP DUB WISE

**JAMICAN JCD012 CD**  
As a sweet but rebel roots vocalist, Barry Brown was championed by reggae producer Bunny Lee. He scored his first JA hit in 1979 with "Step It Up Youthmen," from which this album derives its title, and its version, "Step Into Dub," is included here. Also present is "Dub Confusion," versioned from his best-loved song, "Politician," which itself was a re-versioning of Prince's earlier and more popular "Money Money." As with many records on this label, the problem with Steppin' Up Dub Wise is the inclusion of many titles that were originally left on the quarter inch masters for good reason. In the case of 'alternative cuts' or so called 'lost dubs,' they seldom offer anything exceptional or new. Indeed, they were possibly made by an apprentice in the process of warming up the desk for the master, King Tubby. The best here is a fierce, reimagined "Control The Dub" cut to Johnny Garcia's "Jah Jah We Are Walking" that's still inferior to the starring original.

## BURNING SPEAR JAH NO DEAD: AN INTRODUCTION TO...

**ISLAND BCD0095 CD**  
For those who haven't had the pleasure of getting acquainted with reggae's most righteous and charismatic voice, his island recordings are the best place to start. Many veteran reggae fans believe the triumphantly militant clasp horns flowing through Spear's African capture his best music, including 1970s roots music. This 13 track introduction also draws from the other Jack Ruby productions *Q & A*, *Wesley*, *Man In The Hills* and the Spear's final, self-produced

bonus film masterpiece *Social Living*, originally known as *Murcus' Children on the Jamaican release*, and now returned to island after being cut on license for the excellent *Blood & Fire* cutting from a few years back. Bookended by a 12" cut of the title track and a stunning a cappella version of "Jah No Dead," the set is uniformly magnificent. The latter is lifted from the soundtrack of the generally unusing but greatest reggae film *Rockers*, in which, over the sounds of the sea washing in at Key Largo, Jah Spear reasons with the unfortunate Leroy "Horsemouth" Wallace, who has just lost his livelihood — the brand new motorbike that was meant to make him the "hardest record distributor in the island."

## DUBTRIBE SOUND SYSTEM BAGGAGE

**DEFECTED DUBTRIBE CD**  
To my mind, Deep House and dub have very few, if any cultural or musical connections. Many House acts might include dub in their name, or freely let it in their influences, but there are many any causal links connecting Tony Humphries, Larry Levan or Francis Newkirk to King Tubby, Errol Thompson or Syd Buckner. Rather, the use of the word is related to some vague notion of hip. A great title can't disguise the stink of music that's as simultaneously insidious and offensive as the most popular mass product.

## EASY ALL-STARS DUB SIDE OF THE MOON

**EASY STAR ESD012 CD**  
Some days you wake up, go about your business and ostensibly everything is normal. Then something happens that gives you a sense of vague menace, a feeling that you might have stepped into an evil-after-pastel dinner. Marking the original's 30th anniversary, Easy All-Stars dub reggae remake of Pink Floyd's *Dark Side of the Moon* can be played in synchronicity with *The Wizard of Oz*. If you start it at the MGM film's third year. Having never heard the source album all the way through, I felt somewhat free to approach its dub take with more of casual baggage that goes with the appreciation or potential deprecation of a cultural icon. Amazingly, some of the tunes work, especially Corey Harris and Ranking Joe's cover of "Time." The all-star cast includes Frankie Paul, Dr. Head, The Madonnas and Suggs Rankin, all freshly outed as Roid lars, doing new converts or a few dollars richer for the session.

## OTT BLUMENKRAFT

**PISTON PWS002 CD**  
One of the many ornaments to the space dub these long since vacated by the wandering Ott, Ott is reputedly a West Country rebus restricting his activities to nearby shores. Not so much expensive as sampling, all nine tunes exceed some limits, while titles such as "Spinnin' in Pitzer" and "Escape Juice Hell" hint at undelivered humour. In any music loosely

defined as 'modern dub,' there comes a point teetering on overproduction when its chosen threats to cover the spaces that should be there. The album is heavy, dense and demanding indeed, but there's just too much happening, and it could only be rescued by a real dub slowdown. Nevertheless folks will be dancing barefoot on grass under cassettes to these sounds all summer long.

## RANKING JOE ZION HIGH

**BLOOD & FIRE BAF0005 CD**  
Joseph Jackson aka Ranking Joe grew up in a sound system culture, as his father ran a set of Jamaican domino tournaments and other local functions. Joe went on to bigger things, initially with the wonderfully named Smith The Weeper, before being promoted to El Paso and eventually working with U-Roy's King Shaggs and touring the UK in the early 80s with Ray Symbolic H.U. His many influences come to the fore as the basis of this set, originally cut as *Around The World* with Dennis Brown as producer. Dennis Akopone whoops Big Youth style chants and exhortations, and the appearance of his future-legendary multiple 'Bong Daddies' are all melded together in the opener and title cut. It just straddles the edge of Blood & Fire's 70s roots focus, dancehall styles and the heavier early 80s, which are now becoming more accessible to new enthusiasts. Although most of its source tunes from Dennis Brown ("Cup Of Tea" and "Slave Driver") and Black Uhuru ("Wood For My Fire" and "Rent Man") are relatively well known, they are rightly included here, making for a flow that was absent from the original set. And no matter how great the DJ, it's always good to hear the vocal and dub alongside the DJ version.

## VARIOUS DUB SESSIONS

**SESSIONS ESD002CD11 CD**  
When Ian McCain comes out to play in selector mode, you're usually in for a treat. No exception here, as he fills out two discs in the Sessions budget series with dubs spanning the early 1970s and the present. Forgoing rudies for a cultured 35 track selection mainly called from high end release labels, it's an informative probe of the crucial role of dub in the development of music over the past 25 years, investigating every track with iconic wit. Any reggae wondering what this dub business is all about can safely start here.

## VARIOUS HAUL AND PULL UP SELECTA: HEAVYWEIGHT DANCEHALL

**1979-82**  
**TRICAN TDC0006/17TDC012 2XCDs**  
FROM DAVE HENNING: A longtime documenter of reggae in word and image, comes this collection of heavy duty tunes bridging the short gap between the golden ages of roots and the onset of the dancehall era, peering down 12" or song and their dubs. Highlights include two versions of The Marvells' "Kingston 12

"Tuff" and the classic "Rocking Of The 3000" from Badco And Togan, as well as plenty more from The Viceroy, Sanyang Levy, Barry Brown and Stearn Paines under the aegis two CDs. Although this particular period is steadily growing more fashionable in the reissue market, I have always found the style less varied than 70s roots, more insular in its concerns and occasionally dense to the point of impenetrability. However, the best of these tracks stands up well, and a few of them are scattered here in among a pack dominated by the looming production presence of Lunel Thompson, the machine-like Radics, and Scientist and Jammy on the mix.

## VARIOUS JUKE JOINT

**STEREO DELUXE SDO06 CD**  
The grand claim lodged in the subtitle, "a selection of excellent music compiled by Bozoo Bapts," is well founded — with one unremissable exception that would be churlish to identify upfront or anywhere in the next few lines. Via releases on Stereo Deluxe, regular compilation appearances and gigging around Europe, Bozoo Bapts are setting up a fine reputation as a dub dance outfit. The set opens with the beautiful "Star," an intro-dub from Puma Scream with a lyrical Pablo in tow. Underestimated and unjustly ignored in its release, hopefully its inclusion will prompt its reassessment. Though a painful five years in the making, the compilation feels less stoic in the mix, with dub reggae at its heart. Bozoo Bapts pay tribute to their influences, logically connecting John Lee Hooker to Rhythm & Sound, and Greg Isaacs to Terry Callier. In a market glutted by mix albums overrun with increasingly glib segues, this one offers the way.

## VARIOUS THE DUB ADVENTURE: ROOTS OF DUB FUNK 3

**DARTY NTHYCD009 CD**  
Kevin Rutherford, aka the one-man Dub Funk Association, could spend more time on the development and promotion of his own increasingly interesting work. But to his credit, he has maintained his usual elliptical orbit by pulling a diverse set of contributors into volume three of the occasional series, *The Dub Adventure: Roots Of Dub Funk*, featuring his friends and neighbours in the dub world — all united in their mission to protest the natural world from the plague of software driven Techno. The compilation works as an object lesson in nu dub, with key tracks from Jah Warrior with Prince Alla ("Our Father Dub"), pervaded by a sweetly angry lassy horn off, impassioned vocal intro, occasional wail-wail and masterfully infectious drum thump) and Richard himself ("Babylon Kingdom"), featuring sinuous keyboard, abstract treated vocals and anguished jittery percussion). The pace is maintained by UK nu roots classicists like Omega and Viceroy, and sprouting again from American newcomers Ras Shaggs, Burning Babylon and Version City Rockers with King Darius. □

# Electronica

Reviewed by Ken Hollings

## AMBULANCE THE CURSE OF VALE DO LOBO PLANET MUSE 200857 CD

Less a sequence of beats and melodies than a set of intricate conversations, the music emanating from the burned-outed consciousness that is Ambulance floats and spins and gyrates, but rarely settles. Effects shift from shape to shape, caught in a precarious balance between beginning and ending without ever obtaining either. Details snag the attention as events slide by. Voices ricochet and stretch across audio space from "Dead Weight" into the title track and beyond. "Rodeo" blends liquid impressions, sharp percussive accents and nearly passed keyboards. Rhythms topple into space on "Xunzi", while "Jam Bugler" is probably how T0's live studio ritual Healden Earth might sound recalibrated for the 21st century.

## ASSEMBLER ASSEMBLER 2 THRILL JOCKEY TRILL133 CD

Freed from the confines of his Scope, Child's View and Audio Sports personas, Nobuko Ikenuma shows his laptop into a shadowy corner and then twirls it arm up off the software circle.

"Corvus Rave" may flutter and flicker prettily at the start of this set, and "Dopamine" seems to hint at some genre revolutions, but the densely layered audio streaming on "Ukino" and "Molia" suggest more serious-minded processes at work. These in turn only give us preparation for the closer "Sous Terre", which has been digitally programmed to scrape the wax out of any pair of ears within listening range. Cheaper than a certain bud, but not quite so gentle.

## AURELIE DESSE QUE NACI SMASHED CD

Quiet introspection has rarely been so panoramic or expansive. At its core, this release from Colin Newman's Swm label is one endless reverberation that's quietly sublimely yet inevitably forward-looking at the same time. After a few brief bubbles of activity and perils of rhythm on "Divisible By Three", recalling some of US desert rockers Soggy Republic's blunder earlier days, Aurelie settles into the contemplation of distance on "Sea/Soy Mountain" and the dreamlike somnifaction of "I Am Here". The overall feeling, however, is one of electronic ambience rediscovered and rendered new, as in the pulsating "Wish Sun Descend" and the thoughtful "Katha". This is Knuckbox as you remember it, not how it was.

## EAVESDROPPER SHOTCRETE KNOB SOUNDS KNOB501 CD

Over the past ten years, Yes or May as Eavesdropper has been working in film, television commercials, dance and theatre as a composer and sound designer. Made up of tracks created for a dance piece by Wim Vandekeybus and Ultra Vm entitled *Scorching The Inner Field*, Shotcrete is a solid study in sturdy textures and tenebrous strengths. With no information given on

the nature of the performance itself, it's hard to assess how well the sounds and movements worked with each other, although there's enough dynamic range to the material and a sufficient variety of approach to indicate that an evening in its company wouldn't have been entirely wasted.

## ICARUS SIX SOVIET MISFITS THE TEMPORARY RESISTANCE THROB 1002 CD

A CD compilation of previously available material, derived predominantly from the Soviet Igloo EP on Output Records and Mixtapes from Not Applicable, with their "U6" 12" chucked in for good measure, finds Otte Bown and Sam Britton twirling receptors and expectations on both sides of the Atlantic now. Taken together, the material presents a picture, built up over the past two years, of technique being taken the long way round. It's a series of random meanderings and kindly observed patterns rather than a complete statement. As a summation it consequently suggests little in the way of progress, and as a package it never rises above its various parts.

## KID 606 THE ILLNESS TIGERBASTE MEGAW07 12"

As a cartoon exercise on the mechanics of perpetual motion directed by Tax-Away, the 12" mix of "The Illness", taking the Kid's forthcoming album release on Igloos, seems to be getting fatuously and fabulously faster while roughly maintaining the same tempo. Its stereo-banging partner "Ecstasy Motherfucker" pulls off more or less the same trick with an equally manic pace, suggesting what might have happened if The Three Stages ever got it into their heads to invent House, insult rock n' roll. Rhythmic things off one these snarl break tracks while gentle contritions offer almost but seldom promise.

## KNIFEHANDCHOP ROCKSTOPPER TIGERBASTE MEGAW07 CD

Rene's Billy Pollard gets physical with more futuristic soundtracks for cities of collapsing tower blocks, bad botchus acid and big ass killer robots who know where you live. Here's a guy who's sure to be the fact that destruction is the ultimate program for the human imagination, and that technology is only as scary as the people who use it. Chalk out the animators' breakdown of the gangster lense on "Healed On Ebonics (Still Out Mad)" and the relentless nihilistic bubble monomorph of "Fables The Punk" and "I Hate Your Fucking Race". Following on from his *Big The Nape* and a seed of wicked vinyl for Istant and Tigerbaste, this should spread the word and keep the knife off the street.

## MATHIEU/MENS/SCHAEFER/ TIMELINE QUALITY HOTEL MUTEX MIX CD, CLUB CD

Four visitors to the MIXTEK festival in Montreal decided to take the event's collaborative ethos to

the next stage by transforming a hotel room into a sound studio for the duration of one morning. The resulting sequence of seven deftly structured pieces, presumably completed just before the mold came round to change the towels, is loosely layered, subtly alert and inventive. Germany's Stephan Mathies, Holland's Raboud Mens, together with the UK's Janek Schaefer and Translating from the US, display admirable collaborative talents. The protracted group effort on the 16 minute "Eightroom Floor" is particularly notable for its subtlety and restraint. At least until they started angling over the mayor bill.

## MU AFRO FINGER AND GEL OUTPUT NO NUMBER CD

Not the first outfit to go by that name, but certainly the first you'd actually want to go to bed with. Mu is a boy/girl duo long based in Sheffield featuring Muzium Kanemaki a way from her home in rural Japan and Maurice Fulton from the United States. Volcanic and cat by turns, their debut release may not kick all of your fond assumptions and static orthodoxies into the weeds but it's certainly do to now. "Let's Get Sick" is a brutal masterpiece of hardbody Techno and nerve-jangling disco trash. "My Name Is Tanna" is a tragically recorded photo session sharing the novel degradation of its characters, and if "Destroying House Nations" isn't actually a love song, it should be treated as one.

## MUSLIMGAUZE IRANIAN INFLIGHT MAGAZINE MUSLIMGAUZE CD

Referring to the Iranian civilian aircraft shot down by the US military back in the day when it was still acceptable foreign policy to supply Iraq with the occasional weapons of mass destruction, the latest limited edition release from Byn Jones's posthumous archive is a subtly taut affair. Bitter and sharp-edged, this sequence of compositions, each billed after a caption lifted from Iran's inflight magazine, has a tempo and disciplined ardor to it. The one extended moment of relief comes on "A Small Intimate Box, Which Contains Red Blue Opium Madras", a lifting understated piece over which vocals drift impressively with each new subscription title. Muslimgauze is further revealed as an excellent fixed point in history, offering valuable perspectives and insights. Long may he do so.

## QRT FAARTE INSTANT OTTICUM07001 CD

Kurt Ballwatz, from Stavanger, Norway, was originally one kind of Fibre-Optic with Kjetil D Brandstad of Noyagt and Sindre Bjørge of Tenno/label Gold Sound. His first solo release, a dapper six track affair, keeps its edges neat and economies quietly under control. Making great interplay between darkness and light. "Electric Quip" sets the mood for the six, with pulsating locked keyboards and Hi-Pop beats on "My Pappas" and the rhythmic effervescence of "Eg Kyoma Det Basse Men Galdige Siu Av

Korlen". By contrast, "Chromstapper" comes creeping in at the end, a ragged display of ghastly effects and muted impact. Co-released by giant electronic thespians Istant and Boleman's own label, this could get very ambitious very quickly.

## THE RIP OFF ARTIST IN THROUGH THE OUT DOOR TIGERBASTE MEGAW08 CD

Does this latest album from Matt Haines indicate a turn to something more mannered, more thoughtful and reserved? Nah, course not. A random dip into The Rip Off Artist's lucky bag usually produces something worthwhile, and there are enough rub-on tarzans, skull raps and cheap candy on offer to keep everyone happy. "Bea Beem Beem" is a kooky mangle with Dilman U rapping in his native tongue, "Pats" bleeps like a lost satellite and "Wobbling Vegetable" cheerfully reveals some of the more inventive sex aids available in the hedonistic late 70s. With whimsy, charm and inventiveness to spare, the collection easily lives up to its title.

## VARIOUS GLAMOUR IS UNDEAD: 13 ELECTRONIC STANDARDS KNOB SOUNDS KNOB01 CD

Most gestures towards blending electronics with lounge music are doomed from the start by the failure of those involved to acknowledge the striking similarities between the two forms. Both are involved in the same dynamics, fixations and effects. It's what they have in common that sets them most apart. This attempt to showcase Belgium's thriving electronics scene by having its artists reconstruct a few super club standards is further compromised by the extraordinarily flat and lacklustre results they've been given to work with. Unsurprisingly, several tracks seem pale in the modern on "Diamonds Are A Girl's Best Friend" by shoving everything through a vocoder, while Goldcutsmen slams the bass hard upside "You Do Something To Me" in the hope that no one will notice. Chances are that they will, especially on Styrolam's probable version of "You've Changed", which should come with its own health warning.

## VARIOUS 1 MINUTE MASSACRE VI KNOB SOUNDS KNOB001 CD

38 united tracks by 38 high velocity digital noise artists brought together from all over the world and then crammed down onto one disc in a continuous cut and paste mix. Contrasts flash by, points of attention and release crash together exuberantly in the unlikely event that one of these lightly charged and flamboyantly lethal pieces of electronic intensity misses its target, don't panic. Another one will be along in a few seconds. Just don't forget to duck and cover. Not surprisingly the whole thing comes packaged in a nostalgia meter-gangster homage to vintage mafioso and low budget slasher movies. The collection looks off with a vocoder clip taken from an ancient school education movie on how to prevent a nuclear attack. □

# Global

Reviewed by Clive Bell

## CHIDAMBARAM TEMPLE PERIYA MELAM

**OSCARA CASCINO CD**  
South Indian vaishnatham Kanti Gelanarth, who has toured the UK twice with Evan Parker, started out playing his father's instrument, the long ylang oboe called nagaswaram. Here is an album of pieces for nagaswaram dueling with loud barrel drums, recorded inside a Hindu temple in south India. This Karnatic tradition is far older than north Indian classical music, having been written down more than 3000 years ago. To the Western ear, the nagaswaram/drums combo is an extraordinary, spine sound, excited in a simple harmonium drone, and free from the lush ambience of the northern raga tradition. Like some odd mix of Albert Ayler and Anthony Braxton, it's abrasive and soulful, even as it's concerned with intricate complex mathematics of rhythm. Watching Karnatar percussionists trade phrases is like watching mathematicians challenging each other to ever more elaborate numeric drills, but always with enormous good humour. Though skeletons support these ancient compositions and intricate improvisations, all of them linked to Hindu temple rituals.

## KOBY ISRAELITE DANCE OF THE IDIOTS

**TZADIK TZ17119 CD**  
A justified and disappointing release from John Zorn's usually reliable Radical Jewish Culture series. Koby Israelite is a young, London-based Israeli musician who plays drums, guitar, accordion and keyboards, and whose admission for Zorn's Naked City period is clear. But his attempt to mesh together samples of Cantorial singing, Speed Metal guitar and frenzied drum programming, nervously titled "What Makes Any Sense", has little to do with all over a Making sense series name "Dodge", where a Rastaman accordion melody fails to engage with Israelite's overheard drum solo. Guests David Azmon and Marcel Maradiaga contribute fire clarinet and violin, but sadly Israelite's writing, when he's not playing tricks with samples, is anonymous. There's just not enough emotional depth, the one thing listeners expect from Jewish music. Offering new steps of light, the opening and closing tracks, "Sants And Saints" and "Nephtyloph" (sic), confidently expose a kind of Jewish lounge jazz — some partial truth, perhaps.

## MORELENBAUM/SAKAMOTO A DAY IN NEW YORK

**SONY CLASSICAL S900016 CD**  
To dole this album, Paula Morelenbaum sings the charming, understated "Fragole" over a beat that swirls as delicately as a spider's web in a down breeze. The only problem is whether you can stay awake through the preceding ten charming, understated songs as they blur into a charming, understated massina where one spontaneous bossa nova is hardly distinguishable from the next. Sakamoto is clearly enjoying himself, and takes a particularly good piano solo on "Inseparable", floating a few well-chosen notes across the gentle bossa beat. Jacques

Morelenbaum's cello weaves tasteful counter-melodies across her wife's voice, but the effect of a madigan cocktail party is reinforced by the dulcet CD packaging. For seen in a split. The day of the title is 7 February 2002, when the studio recording was made, straight after the two concluded their world tour. With subtle support from guitar and percussion, the album aims to capture the performances they had developed during that tour. Most songs are by the late Antonio Carlos Jobim, in whose home the trio's first album, *Casa*, was recorded.

## NASSIMA MUSIQUE ANDALOUSE DALGER

**INSTITUT DU MONDE ARABE 91046 CD**  
Always something interesting from the Institut Du Monde Arabe — this is an Algerian Kaba, a suite of love poems from female vocalist Nassima and her group's strings. Futes, nubia and surprisingly, piano. The Kaba is a centuries-old music, its history traceable back to ninth century Spain, and Nassima's performance has helped preserve it. Playing the traditional mandole kaba, she sings verses of poetry in a clear, highly ornamented mezzo-soprano. These slow vocal passages are interspersed with lively ensemble workouts. Their rich orchestral sound was very well recorded in Paris. Other brief interludes are played on the viola, held vertically, by 64-year-old Algerian maestro Abdelhamek Belkacem.

## PAUL SHAPIRO MIDNIGHT MINYAN

**TZADIK TZ17114 CD**  
What was someone just saying about Jewish lounge jazz? Bang on cue, New Yorker Paul Shapiro has assembled a lounge set from his long-term associates to contribute yet another album to Zorn's Radical Jewish Culture series. Shapiro's talent as sax, husky intonation of recordings with Lou Reed and Michael Jackson, sits comfortably on the alert but relaxed bass and drums of Booker T and Jay Lovino. Set Mob's Steve Bernstein plays trumpet, and the bulk of the tunes are Jewish dances, from movie explorations like "Sim Shalom" to the Bar Mitzvah mayhem of "To Life". There are many pleasures here: Brian Mitchell's perfectly understated piano solo on the opening "We Lecha Hagada"; Shapiro and Peter Aflalo on scintillating soprano saxes negotiating, along with Bernstein's trumpet, the high-jacked melody of "Sim Shalom". Also outstanding is Shapiro's own "Leslie Young's Mischkebrun", invoking the great tenor sax player via the Jewish mode of Mischkebrun. Odd school jazz, with soul to spare, inaugurated by a set of Jewish modal melodies.

## RADIO TAFIRA FIEBRE

**WORLD CIRCUIT W0006 CD**  
At first best, Radio Tafari are a sultry Spanish group, all loose fuses and incoherent flamenco vocals. Sufi's music is a mix of their doing in Spain's medieval and Arabic past, and they have emerged as one of their country's most popular groups. Subtlety is halfway out the

window, however, on this live recording from a Toronto concert, exchanged for grandstanding solos owing more to modern jazz than anything dark and Mediterranean. Exciting atmosphere is engendered by an audience that can't wait to hear its opportunity of arias on out or a very fine. Unfortunately, what I want from Radio Tafari is more mood, mellow songs about wrinkled hands ("Carson Sola"), and less disco-happy rhythms supporting perfunctory soprano solo ("Elli Heidi Haq Ennas"). Best to stick with studio albums like the excellent *Temporal*.

## UTLA SONG

**NOCTURNE 0001 CD**  
Ulla is a free Norwegian the touring Karl Seglem on tenor sax, Nilsen Hegren on the dark, traditional Hardanger fiddle, and the unique percussion of Torgeir Sævi, who taps into early primitivism with dancing stones, bells and a bass drum deeper than a mine shaft. Ulla move freely between bad tunes, their own compositions and improvisation. On their own "Over Fjell", Sævi sounds like a harbour full of yachts in the wind, makes a little. He also underpins the medieval-sounding "Freidase Menn" with a jaw bag spriting like a jig line. What I like about Ulla is that they sound utterly contemporary without resorting to any of the tired devices many contemporary folk groups employ to spice up their act. Traditional melodies, many of them sturdy and catchy northern tunes, are made to swing and sway in intriguing ways, and Hegren's grinding, ringing fiddle hines around the clear vocals of guest Bent Ophel, who sings on most tracks. On "Haldraidd", Ophel lets down her hair and calls home the cat from the next mountain but one. Seglen's "Rjukan" is a wonderfully gloomy tune in a haunting arrangement. As ever with Ulla, Seglen is a lovely collection of rich acoustic colours, but more thoughtfully, less wild and menacing than earlier efforts. Have the Ulla boys reined in their past few excesses, or are they on best behaviour because there's a girl in the house?

## VARIOUS URBAN DESI: SOUNDS FROM THE REAL ASIAN UNDERGROUND

**INDISCUSOUND 100000 CD**  
To use an expression which you probably don't hear much in the Real Asian Underground, this collection of UK Asian Garage and breakbeat tracks is simply marvellous fun. Opening with a collaboration between mainstream MC Karl B and the Playable Hit Squad, the pace barely flags till the mellow "Nanna" shows the album 16 tracks later. Karl B's stream of street consciousness atherms with a richly ornamented Indian vocal, plus added digital weirdness. In fact present songs, most of them a throwback less subtle than this one, are clearly flavoured of the month in South-Asian. Handsworth and Whimsey Asian youth don't party. Rhythmic repetition of Bollywood samples makes for blessed old drum 'n' bass on "No School Desi".

Bobby Deekia oozes an ultra-sweet high vocal on "Hasi Hasi" — a great Indian percussion, great production, all it takes is a killer chorus. The collage of the frenetic club drum with Garage bass is highly produced, and Dr Deekia and New Sutra generate terrific, sexy swaying on their respective tracks. Good taste and restraint can stay at home, especially while the Sahasas exercise their insanely epic production skills on "Mass Hage". Turn up those Bollywood mandolins in the mix. In fact, it's all good — turn it all up.

## VÄRTTINÄ IKI

**FINNA MM0402 CD**  
Releasing their third album in 20 years, Finnish folk nine-piece Värttinä provide a polished show of high production values, led by thrilling close harmony vocals from a trio of blonde Nordic goddesses (see cover photos). Fiddles, kamle atthes, double bass and accordion underline lively, energetic songs in which mandrins merrily paring lads ("The boys trot like a herd of pigs, undernourished, sweating it to burst") in the ancient tradition of Karelian women's chants. It's all acoustic, and Värttinä may be as commercial a folk sound as you can get without bringing in the programme and descending into Afro-Celt. For all their veneer, however, Värttinä are starting to sound like a well oiled machine, from which personality and quirk have been suppressed in the interests of musical efficiency. Powerful ensemble music, but some rogue element is badly needed.

## CAMEL ZEKRI NUSSE HOTTENOTE LA NIUT

**TRANSFIGURATIONS LNT001 14 CD**  
Camel Zekri is a young Algerian guitarist with a very serious (mis)reading of "misreading" influenced by African guitar styles. His already has several albums on French labels, alongside Denis Dolin, Xavier Charles and Ron Anderson. This solo outing arrives in remarkable packaging, within a small book containing photos of Africa and part of a 1950s essay on colonialism by Aimé Césaire. The music is colonised by two substantial, meditative improvisations on acoustic guitar. Zekri's clear, tall statements are eloquent and beautiful. He refers to traditional African patterns but largely stays non-rhythmic, flowing from one collection of ornamented phrases to another in conversational fashion. The closing "Tombou des Caribbes" is all the better for being unturned. Less convincing are some of his experiments with overdubbing his own electric playing over acoustic guitar, but these get more interesting as the album progresses, and as the music itself becomes more adventurous. The tectonic, prepared guitars of "8-9" lead to "Hanna", where vocal experiments weave around the instrument. Then there's the bold mix of "Les Derris De La Terre", in which bowed guitars create a vast, strange environment for a distant African chant sequence. Plenty of intriguing ideas here, and Zekri is clearly not aware to musical risk-taking, even if his simplest ideas come off best. □





# Jazz & Improv

Reviewed by Julian Cowley

## ACTIS BAND GARIBALDI

**LEO UNUS CD**  
Italian modernists Carlo Azis Dato, a member of the Italian Modern Orchestra, has a knack of finding rock ways to channel high spirits into music with real substance. As its rhythmic core, Actis Band is a highly conceived progressive rock group. Antonio Fontana's electric guitar sustains a surface tension of riffs and flash that now and again teeters into nicely timed thrashing. Dato (on bass clarinet, tenor and baritone) and Massimo Rossi (alto and soprano saxophones) beef up the R&B, trade infectious licks and wail and fall sporadically. Dato's compositions spike this mix with conceivable melodies stamped with the spirit of village festivities and suggestions of Balkan folk. Despite its turbulence this is integrated group music, charming energy contained within a coherent Actis Band sound. On the cover they're dressed as members of Giuseppe Garibaldi's revolutionary band of brothers, clearly having still more fun.

## APOSTOLIC POLYPHONY APOSTOLIC POLYPHONY

**SHIRAZI RECORDS CD**  
**THE BLUE SERIES  
CONTINUUM**  
**THE GOODANDEVEL SESSIONS**  
THIRTY-SEVEN 54:13/14 CD

*Apostolic Polyphony* is a weighty title and it denotes a weighty trio. Pianist Matthew Shipp comes out glowing: back to back venturated with trickling lines. Drummer Andrew Barker rumbles and circles around the rock-like Charles Waters, on B flat clarinet and alto saxophones, flashes through the gravity and sobriety with fine incisive cackling lines. The trio connects back together but each player is instead quite free to have expansive personal statements in the course of the music's eight movements. Waters is especially impressive on "Three-Part Invention." The concluding track is a Shannon Fields remix, an unexpected and effectively disturbing duos to this acoustic suite with equally electronics asked across the trio's somber ground.

The Goodandevil Sessions were, as the name indicates, "flood and dried, flood and dried" by Goodandevil and Miso. Shipp's Blue Series is a title too large intended for my taste, often sounding good but regularly missing the spectra of smoke and mirrors, taking precedence over substance. He plays electric piano here and sounds buoyant. Josh Roseman and Alex Leshko's trombones are prominent, William Parker plays bass and Roy Camacho trumpet so there's real body there. The dismemberment and reassembly is tellingly done. It's attractive, yet formalistic and stock effects still arise doubts.

## THE CARLA BLEY BIG BAND WANT TO ROCK

The name Carla Bley remains firmly yoked to the flawed majesty of *Excavator Over The Hill* (1971). In the wake of that glitzy burlesque of

wild ideas and calculated extravagance, Bley has often seemed a little too controlled and secure, divertingly eccentric rather than contrarily disruptive. Over the years she has delivered a string of fine compositions, and her very humor seems increasingly to affirm that although her skillfully crafted arrangements might sometimes seem pervasively inappropriate they always match her intention. Looking *For America* announces the American national anthem, takes a sidelong glance at "Old MacDonald Had A Farm" and looks also musically to Canada, Cuba and Mexico. Pastiche, variation and revision are offered as oblique commentary upon the state of the nation. As over Bley allows her soloists ample room to display their class. Saxophonists Andy Shepard and Wolfgang Puchner, trombonist Lew Soloff and trombonist Gary Valente are in the ranks and her trust is, of course, well placed.

## ANTHONY BRAXTON TWO COMPOSITIONS (TRIO) 1998

**LEO UNUS/SHIRAZI CD**  
Live readings of compositions n.227 and n.228, to be specific: both intentions of Braxton's Ghost Dance Music series, his idiosyncratic take on minimalism with repeated pulsing notes slowly modified and interspersed with bursts of structured improvisation. n.227 finds Braxton on alto and Faltio saxophones, clarinet and flute, Chris Jones blows soprano, alto and tenor and David Novak moves between bassoon, contrabassoon, piccolo, celesta and "plastic Indonesian tourist instrument." Variations of instrumental colour and shading are important to Ghost Dance Music, which has at times threatened to go wayworn in its principle of insistent restatement of a limited set of material. n.228 has Braxton at the deep end, intertwining loose and serpentine dissonances and complex current. Seth Mosek and Jackson Moore both bring along alto and baritone saxes and Moore plays clarinet too. Both pieces beg the question whether the improved passages invoke the automatic-like minimalism or whether the minimalist spell is broken by those departures from regularity. Maybe of the Ghost Dance were working its magic as intended that question wouldn't arise. Braxton's motives are often opaque and it's unwise to be hasty in judgment his dedication to this series is certainly something to ponder.

## JEFF CHAN IN CHICAGO

**ASIAN IMPACT ARTISTS CD**  
There is circumstantial pignarity to this upbeat release. Trumpeter Annon Muhammad died, at the age of 48, six months after the August 2002 session with tenor and soprano saxophonist Jeff Chan, bassist Tashi Aoki and drummer Chad Taylor that produced these eight pieces. Muhammad and Chan shared a forthright approach to their home, steering clear of abstractness and inconceivable in favour of bold, energetic articulation. The closing track "Cardinals," recorded live, was inspired by Korean folk drumming, but Chan's main source

of inspiration seems to run from Sonny Rollins through John Coltrane with occasional input from Ornette Coleman's example. Taylor and Aoki settle for an understatement, unimpassioned supporting role, although more to the fore in the concert recording. Muhammad, who played the most arch shell too, was a celebratory musician with a robust tone, touches of Lester Bowie's mischief and glints of geriatric glossiness in his phrasing.

## ELLERY ESKELIN WITH ANDREA PARKINS & JIM BLACK ARCANUM MODERNE

**HATULODJ 1998 CD**  
Ellery Eskelin can gratify all expectations of a tenor saxophone player in terms of tone, drive and melodic inventiveness. He plays with evident relish for the familiar qualities of the instrument and he writes music that jells that familiarity out of its groove. The groove is often still implied but Eskelin and his collaborators take off along more oblique tracks. This too with accord and drums is not a combination that readily suggests itself, yet it's been in existence for almost a decade with a recorded output that is strikingly consistent in character and quality. Eskelin's thorough knowledge of the group's individual and shared capabilities and inclinations enables him to supply appropriate composed structures. Accordant Parkins, who also contributes plans and samples, struggles unpredictably, even uncanny elements into Eskelin and Black's well-lit space. They respond by fluctuating and diffusing their more straightforward playing into curious shapes. Arcanum Moderne has the feel of everyday objects melting or transforming while solid images of those objects stay fixed in the mind.

## PETER FAIRCLOUGH & KEITH TIPPETT IMAGO

**JAZZPRINT JPM110 CD**  
A cyrtal and piano follow and you're immersed in "The February Sea," a characteristically elemental improvisation from Keith Tippett, recorded in concert in the deeply sympathetic company of percussionist Peter Fairclough. Tippett really is unparalleled in his capacity to conjure the equivalent of orchestral low poems from his instrument. It's a grand conception of the piano as sounding object: matched by techniques evolved purposefully to meet his musical vision. The 45 minute improvisation "Imago," named after the mature form of insect life that follows larva and pupa, is a scintillating effluence from that attentive technical reserve. "Imago" displays at length the pianist's quixotic transformations of jazz idiom into highly personal terms, thoroughly testing Fairclough's mettle. The culmination of this long imagining is a foreboding as Tippett, recalling his most misused friend Mongol Ferit, flights on the South African trumpet's glorious theme "You Ain't Gonna Krow Me 'Cos You Think You Krow Me." Two shorter pieces conclude, adding as breathing space to adjust to less exceptional experiences.

## ANDERS GAHNOLD TRIO FLOWERS FOR JOHNNY

**ATLANTIC/SHIRAZI CD**  
Johnny Dorn, who died in 1986, was a special musician. His base playing was agile, sincere and heartfelt, whether the context was the legendary Blue Notes, John Stowell's Detroit or this trio with Swedish artist Gahnold and fellow South African exile Gilbert Matthews on drums. A 67 minute festival set recorded in 1983 and a half-hour club set from 1985, both at venues in Sweden, are paired for this welcome release. Gahnold is an imposing soloist who combines deftly post-bop fluency and equity with a forceful, at times sandblasting tone to deliver a selection of his own themes plus Gershwin's "Summertime." Matthews, whose varied experiences have encompassed work with Sarah Vaughan, Archie Shepp and Abdulah Ibrahim, measures time with poise and detailed subtleties. Aid Dorn's reverberant warmth and versatility ring through, a strong and plentiful reminder of his great bass sound.

## STEFAN KEUNE & JOHN RUSSELL FREQUENCY OF USE

**HURCHHAUT NO HURCH CD**  
A sequel to *Excerpts & Offprints* (Acta) this new release from saxophonist Keune and guitarist Russell continues to pursue a Spartan course among few improvising possibilities. Russell's playing has always proclaimed its initial indebtedness to Derek Bailey's example, but teasing away at his study acoustic instrument Russell has developed a quite distinct pool of expressive options, some openly or obliquely allusive to other music's more grounded squarely in the guitar's physical structure. Keune marries an idiosyncratic but on some occasions heroic playing style but mostly he probes the shifter's horn's somewhat circumscribed range. His persistent squeals, edgy yells and howling are scarcely aids to relaxation but their clarity and lightness are well suited to good Russell's customary thoughtfulness into devious action.

## OSASATURA VERSO

**REX 02 CD**  
Osasatura came into being as a quartet in 1995 and since then have collaborated with some remarkable improvisers, including Stevie Nicks and the ensemble Musica Elettronica Viva. Verso is a trio work, with Elio Martuscelli playing CDs and electronic devices, Fabrizio Spers using electronics, amplified objects and strings, and Luca Venturoli on synthesizer, sampler and accordion. The kind of dynamic sound assemblages they specialise in, refined yet possessing a gritty minimal toughness, are less uncommon than when Osasatura formed, but Verso is outstanding. Carefully constructed tirades and highly controlled pacing result in an auditory tapestry of taut movement, contrast with a colourfully considered sense of structure yet preserving vital elements of discovery and spontaneous reaction. □

# Outer Limits

Reviewed by David Keenan

## NEIL CAMPBELL & ROB HAYLER IN LUCK

FINDING FLOWFORM RECORDINGS FF051 CD

The Leeds-based Finding Flowform label has been performing a real public service over the past few years, documenting the sub-radar broadcasts beamed from the boats of licensed musicians all across the north of England. Any low-level aural of that particular port of the map is bound to pick up on the activities of Walsolstead Orchestra member Neil Campbell, and the label have done a good job of making some of his more oddball recordings available. In Luck sees Campbell paired with label boss Rob Hayler, although overall it feels less like a collaboration and more like a split release. The first three tracks, minimal electro instrumentals that pulse with undulating and interference in a way that seems firmly derivative of the Basic Channel sound, feel more like Hayler solo tracks, whereas the last three, celestial rainbows of eternally-peaking drone and tinkered percussion, bear Campbell's unmistakable fingerprint. Unless, of course, I'm mistaken.

## DON DIETRICH DIETRICH

ELÉVAGE DE POUSSIERE EPF01 LP

Both as a member of Babelandians and an infrequent soloist (one LP on Static/Peasel besides this one), Don Dietrich has completely reinvented the saxophone as a conduit for his own brand of minimal emotionalism, wiring it with electronic effects, dropping microphones into the bell and baking horns with yellow freed-jazz Jim Sliester to create the unearthly "bells together" effect. In the process he has succeeded in improving the instrument from the jazz tradition altogether. On his own, as here, his conceptions are still orthodox, with a snark of electronics effectively serving as a shadow presence, enabling him to interact with himself across a slew of tracks that combine an mesmerizing high-energy attack with the kind of aggressively existential sense of quest that marks out all of the greatest solo saxophone sides.

## EG OBLIQUE GRAPH COMPLETELY OBLIQUE

PHOTONFORM GAUZE/CD CD

Completely Oblique brings together a bunch of cassette-only releases and a lone 7" from Bryn Haworth that predates his work as Muslinguist. 1982's Extended Play, Phans Room and Trapsuit and 1983's Inflat. Much of it is just plain ghostly, the opening "fall Into Grass" sounds like a particularly pure Ultravox drone, complete with the kind of synth sound that immediately conjures so many images of played trousseaux and dandruff-flecked gals. The rest of the material impacts on a more satisfyingly subliminal level, with blurts of TV noise and between-stations "shortwave made strange", with ovals of cheap electronics, slowed speech and dead, vaguely melancholic loops. The later material's stoned up beat is a little more like a no-budget bedroom take on the monolithic industrial electronics of Kwant Avenue Cluster, but didn't everything back there?

## HANS FIELLESTAD 33

ACCRETIONS ALP002 CD

Fjellestad is a musician and filmmaker based out on America's West Coast, while 33, apparently filed in accordance with specific nomenclature, presents a smattering of his piano interventions. When he's actually playing the keys with his hands, Fjellestad has an attack that's somewhere in the dense box as Coal Train, albeit with none of the density or force of vision. Instead, he seems most interested in observing the fact of the piano as sound source, drawing out the song of its innards with field recordings, bows, flutists of loose change and various computer-generated phantoms. Although there are a couple of tracks that transcend this kind of Luok, no hands' methodology, particularly "Smoke Shunk", which recast the kind of post-coital acknowledgment of breath, waves and sighing notes of Neal's "Lull" World, once you're done marvelling at Fjellestad's alchemical abilities you're pretty much cooked this nut.

## KENNETH HIGNEY ATTIC DEMONSTRATION

RESEMBLY ACC004 CD

Kenneth Higney was a struggling singer-songwriter when he cut Attic Demonstration in 1976, a demo record of such massive outsider vision that it dropped straight into the void, as well as the deep depths of a band of committed record collectors. Initially intended as a calling card to help him get his songs covered by other artists, Higney soon branched out into selling the disc as an actual album, placing low-key ads in a couple of NYC papers and sending out a bunch of review copies. Only Trouser Press took the bait, saluting Attic Demonstration as "a case between Lou Reed and Neil Young about the art of melody". Now officially available for the first time, Attic Demonstration is one of the most endearing and intensely human "real people" discs to turn up for a while, bearing Modern Loaves-style road-belted songs with a Jagger-esque snarl and propelled on pinging rhythms that would do The Shaggs proud, through meandering tonal waltzlands where Higney's eye-wateringly snarled vocals are supported by maximal chord patterns that progress according to the position of the stars. Best of all is the addition of both sides of Higney's funk/punk tribute single, when he narrowside contemplates like The Dead Boys and Johnny Thunders and dimes "dirty downtown bar" with "the sexy music of John Denver". Almost too good to be true.

## JUNKO SLEEPING BEAUTY

ELÉVAGE DE POUSSIERE EPF00 LP

Junko is the vocalist with Japanese nose-groove and Sleeping Beauty is a knowingly beautiful document of her solo vocal experiments, evasive wordless stunts torn from the lining of her throat and fed through a bare microphone and amp set-up to its unimpaired bytates there are muted parallels with Lullie like Diamond Gals, Petty Waters and Meredith

Monk, but Junko moves further into the realm of pure sound, at points plotting the same kind of suspenseful under regular space that is atmospheric. Junko's taste regularly associates with his hits. However, she works in soft vocal tones, with an undulating high-pitched scream held alongside a gruff barrage of bars and gasps. The second side repeats the whole thing backwards. As Michel Mermet's always entrancing laws put it, "to that psychonatalist [sic] id, to the trouble Eros, to the perforated tongue from the pornographic body. It surely takes a lot of perversity to get submitted to that." Well, yeah.

## SEI MIGUEL RA CLOCK

HAUGHTIGS D0006 CD

Temperer and paired Sei Miguel is a key player in Lisbon's burgeoning free music scene, a role of committed initiatives that also includes guitarist Manuel Mota and bassist Magda Garcia. All three players feature on the title track of this new collection of Miguel's tentatively constructed compositions, a tribute to San Tar that pits spare metallic percussion and "wind gong" up against some subtly coercive bass. Miguel's trumpet playing has some of the largest, cold fury of Bill Dixon but lacks the reach of Dixon's epic slow-motion awe. Nevertheless, it's a set-up that makes for some interesting listening, as Miguel loses off intricate patterns of spit that need to be ground with barely a nod to any kind of thematic or sequential development. It's a focused approach to sound that's most apparent on the tracks that feature smaller ensembles, especially "Asterion", where Miguel's trumpet and Fale Manan's trombone are noted by minimal organ and percussion, with both accompanists providing a subtly rotating counterpoint to the disc's brain-bubbling squalls.

## MONOS COLLAGE

PUNJAL 003 CD

## MONOS WINDOW

ICH ICHRA CD

## DADA LIVES

FOOTSTEPS OVERHEAD  
PUNJAL 002 CD

Monos is the (son of) Colin Potter, a key founding member of Nurse With Vengeance, and sound artist Damien Tate. They start primarily in hallucinatory aerial landscapes, with Tate feeding Potter field recordings dense with elemental vibratory activity that Potter then extrapolates from using all sorts of creative studio techniques. Collage is 47 minutes of corp penetration, as tumbling metallic spaces send whirling shafts of air spiraling to the surface. Soon they hit a cave where the strobolites strike like celestial glockenspiels. Window sends on a bit like some of Andrew Chalk and Christopher Heenan's work with Merc, although Monos have a less contrived and more hands-off approach to their source material. The first track, "Bird Dream", posits a technicolor rainforest scene, with huge inflatable bells serving to attract back the sun. "Nikens" rewards the scowling as a

giddy urban setting and this time the birds are one-legged pigeons, hanging round the windmill and cooing to a soundtrack of backing off bass and the vertigo of subway trains. Cagney is a hapless member. Costa Lima – basically Monos with synths – do not deliver the deconstructed goods. Footsteps Overhead is in fact much closer to the sound of midgit airplanes launched into a bathtub full of hot, soapy water. As the bubbles disperse they form twin ribbons of high frequency tracks that merge like neon light-bright beams. While Footsteps Overhead makes you rethink little but hard, it's still an enjoyable enough soak.

## RAPOON I AM A FOREIGNER

CRUCIFORM CD005 CD

Rapoon has been the working name of deacon of Brian Stone, ex-Isidore France, since 1992. I Am A Foreigner is titled after a phrase that Stone caught coming off a Teach Yourself Italian cassette that his wife was playing in another room. He abstracted the idea to cover the feeling of encountering any kind of alien sound or language, playing on the accompanying sketching of senses and the gap that opens between sound and meaning, interspersed between various electronic rhythms and modulating melodic cells. Stone's lyrical loops of foreign language sounds, often reduced to bare phonemes, with the result that they work as several simultaneous levels as information heavy sound-bombs whose cadences act as deep-field rhythmic tones. It's a scenario that could potentially make for a uniquely disarming auditory experience but here, couched in Stone's usual accumulation of wicker, New Age rhythms and inoffensive Middle Eastern exotica, it sounds like it would go best with some strong cheese and a bottle of cheap wine.

## THIGHPAULSANDRA DOUBLE VULGAR

HEMISTRICT CD001 CD

The follow-up to 2001's double act, I ThighPaulsandra, Double Vulgar sees the Cape/Coi/Sprinkled collaborator jetton some of the more bubbly/gum loonings of his debut in favour of a heavy and dynamic group sound where swarms of analogic synth and satiating hardy grins (courtesy of Anarchia-period Col member Cliff Stapleton) bracket sleeky proggressive riffs and circular rhythms to the power of head jousting. Thigh's deft application of technically-sifting layers of electronics betrays his deep grounding in 20th century avant theory but the sometimes austere musical settings are effectively contrasted with some occasionally precise double entendres. "His Royal Highness The Prince Of Wales Braches Royal" is a wryway imagining of the momentary dissolution of que that accompanies even a royal pal of the pud, while "Slammer" conjures hazy images of the kind of incongruously banal settings that most of us were forced to make our first stumbling moves in, with lines like "I galled my crotch on the back seat of the Ubercity/Sunshine Drive. Cagney as it comes wrapped in some suitably canterious/ erotic cover photography courtesy of Peter Christopherson and René Thewer. □

# Print Run

New music books: devoured, dissected, dissed



Hit me with your Chapman stick: David Tibet's Current 93 with John Balance (left) at London's 100 Club, 23 April 1985

## ENGLAND'S HIDDEN

REVERSE  
DAVID KEENAN

SAT NOV 4 CO 525  
BY AM HAYNES

"It was a nihilistic little group of people. Yet we've all developed and changed and our creativity has been long-lived when it could have gone the other way and everybody could have committed suicide." John Balance offers this synopsis for the intertwining paths of Current 93, Nurse With Wound, his own group Coil and a handful of other post-industrialists at the centre of prolific wire writer David Keenan's timely look back England's hidden Reverse. No one is better qualified to get their stories down before they finally dissolve into half-remembered tales and drug-polluted hearsay than Keenan, who has already profiled its most protagonists in his magazine. His book essentially picks up where *Wreckers Of Civilization*, Simon Ford's monolithic account of Coam Transmissions and Throbbing Gristle, left off. The main protagonists of *The Hidden Reverse* are one way or another inherit the transgressive agency through which TG reinvented the gruesome, sordid, debique or arcane statements of English society as a means of questioning its social contracts with its subjects.

Current 93's history is a complex affair, and their creator David Tibet is the most beguiling character here. Added by Tibet's near

photographic memory, not to mention his predilection for blurring the lines between metaphysical planes, Keenan traces CS3's amazing story back to Tibet's dreamlike childhood in Malaysia, through his unhappy times at an English boarding school and on to his gradual introduction into the occult, apocalyptic and apocryphal theologies at the core of CS3's work. By the time he had moved to London from Newcastle Upon Tyne in 1980, Tibet already had it in mind to form an extreme electronics outfit that added occult esthetics to the aggression of TG and Whitehouse. Such a desire was partially satiated when he landed a role in early Psychic TV, the group formed by P-Omigie and "Sleazy" Peter Christopherson after TG had terminated their mission. Keenan's corrective duty recounts Tibet's passionate involvement and growing frustration with P-Omigie. The first to jump the PIV ship, Tibet unleashed Current 93 as a torrent of nightmarish, apocalyptic sound collages. Later on, CS3 was reinvented as a vehicle for spartan folk minstrelsy. Keenan cites Lowe, Tiny Tim and Shirley Collins as crucial to Tibet's charge of direction, and his litany of Tibet's non-musical sources is just as compelling. The likes of artist Lesau Wain, composer William Lawes, decadent author Count Stenbol, horror writer Thomas Ligotti and Noddy all figure in Tibet's vision of Christianity, manifest in CS3's grand imagery of suffering, passion and beauty.

Longtime CS3 associate Steven Stapleton's

begin his own concern, Nurse With Wound, several years earlier as an attempt to make "cold, sterile music". Yet Keenan argues that NWW's back catalogue of Surrealist experiments, Lo-rock manifestos, plunderphonic splinterings and generally form-deconstructing music reveals an obscure autobiography of a man obsessed with the creative process. Coming across as saggedly individual and eccentric, Stapleton divulges his work rather simply. "When it comes to creativity, whether I'm building a wall, mixing cement, making a sculpture, painting a picture, or making music, it's all the same. The same energy goes into it, the same creativity goes into it, and there's no room for anybody else." Keenan respectfully differs, mapping a counter argument through Stapleton's numerous source inspirations — for starters, the infamous list of favourite groups published with the first NWW record — his collaborations with Tibet, Whitehouse's William Bennett, gypsy violinist Aranos and others, and his personal relationships.

Though they were enthusiastic users in their early years, chemical abuse for Tibet and Stapleton diminished considerably with age. That's not the case with Coil's Balance and Christopherson. As a schoolboy collector of TG records, Balance had harboured a long-standing crush on Sioux, and the pair became lovers when they were both in Psychic TV. Like Tibet, their eventual disillusionment with P-Omigie caused them to leave and concentrate on their

own project, Coil. From the off, Coil drew energy from writer William S. Burroughs, English occult sea magician Austin Osman Spare and London's gay underground. Drugs were the key to Coil's rituals, through which they attempted to shatter norms of perception, unveiling the fabric of society with their abject transubstantiations, carnivalesque apocalypses and triumphant, regenerative musics. Frustratingly, Coil's story periodically stalls when they repeat attempts to better their third official album, *Love's Secret Domain*, with its follow-up, *Backwards*. In the frequently heightened states they used to work in, the unknown forces they saw conspiring against them must have felt mighty real. Ditty Balance's growing addictions. Documenting the ranges of chemical use on recent Coil, Keenan is almost apologetic in his enthusiasm for their post-LSD albums, the still unfinished *Backwards* notwithstanding, which explore psychotropic ambience and Progladder electronics, as opposed to the sample-heavy vertigo of LSD or Horse Rotator.

Punctuating his concise prose with dry wit while paying due official attention to detail, Keenan's biography is a superb document that effortlessly unveils the intricacies of his main protagonists and their complex accomplices' relationships to post-industrial England. For Current 93, Coil and Nurse With Wound, Keenan argues, Englishness, or rather the perversion and reversal of Englishness as a social construct, is necessary to their production. □

## RAGGED GLORIES BARNEY HOSKINS

PHILIPPO POKI #12 99

BY CLIVE BELL

About to interview Lee Read, Barney Hoskins opens a copy of *Vandy Fair* and needs a questionnaire in which Read is asked, "What is the lowest depth of misery you can imagine?" The only "Baring interviewed by an English journalist" Unfortunately serious when he meets Read, he knows that fair, Hoskins lets him ramble on about how he recorded his latest album. Read wants to talk about studios, sales and compressors. Hoskins doesn't transcribe any of this conversation: "We're not doing an interview for *Guitar World* or *Staxio Stereo*." Yet Hoskins upstages himself as "tawdryly obsequious" for letting Read discuss the things that matter to him. Finally we get to the interview proper, and the first question that presumably matters to Hoskins and his readers: "Do you think you'd have written about New York in the same way if

you'd actually grown up in the city?" The depth of misery goes: "Oh, I have no idea." And so on. Why shouldn't Lee Read make an out of context compressor? Because, yep, it's "doing an interview," for *Mago, Vigne, Q&Q*. The Observer, or another of the night that send both an endless stream of hacks to piss Read off. However, Hoskins is clearly a good guy, and, maybe because he's got the valve straps and guitar pedals off his chest, Read opens up to him after all. It's especially being asked, "How come you're such a genius?" Not such a tough question.

Hoskins is author of *Making For The Sun* (about Los Angeles), *Out Of The Reverse* (about Prince) and a *Band* biography. He was US editor of *Mago* for three years, and currently edits the online *Friday's Rock's Back Pages*. *Ragged Glories* is a collection of his journalism, interviews and profiles, almost all from the late '90s. Hoskins is inevitably sucked into the glibly corporate promotional machine operated on behalf of his subjects. It's frustrating that he never stops to

ask questions about that, his charm is that he comes out smiling, still believing it's possible to focus on the artist and the music. Though talking about music, you understand, means steering clear of those compressors to ask things like: "Has it been difficult surviving your own legend?"

Hanging in a studio with Metallica, he says, "I have the giddy sensation of being a tiny cog in the Metallica machine, doing my bit to push an album that isn't even finished yet." This may sound dangerous, yet he's hell to leave they let him through the door. But Hoskins loves music and is willing to induce Metallica within the embrace of that art. The Metallica piece boils down to a straight-faced cogitation on whether new album *Lulu* is Heavy Metal or alternative. No, you'll just have to buy the book to find out the answer.

Hoskins is unashamedly old school and cynical. He has good insights on Eminem and a fine interview with Beck, but he's at his most comfortable with the older guys. He kicks off a good profile of Little Feat's Lowell George by

confronting to being an "angel-ridden public schoolboy" in the early 1970s, in a "moving puns" interview with Iggy Pop. Hoskins, a "Gunge puns" and Strokes fan, tells Iggy, "I thought you were your greatest when most frustrated." The great survivor replies: "That's the Charlie Parker syndrome that you're getting into. That might have something to do with your own fear of growing up."

How does a rock critic grow up? By answering the death of rock, it seems, and is an epilogue on Nirvana's Kurt Cobain. Hoskins dedicates the page to "Kurt's death rock," the last gasp of rock 'n' roll conviction in our flattening, hyper-mediated societies. Who needs a "leper messiah" in the age of stashed school pop idols? Most at home with stashed legends of authenticity, Hoskins is at his best with Joni Mitchell, Roy Orbison, Phil Spector, JJ Cale and The Beatles. He's most, witless and worst person in the book is Randy Newman. There are no photos, no notes, and nothing at all about compressors. □

## WHERE YOU'RE AT: NOTES FROM THE FRONTLINE OF A HIPHOP PLANET

PATRICK NEATE

BLACKBERRY POKI #12 99

BY JESSICA MALINSKILL

As he tells it, Patrick Neate's quest to take the current pulse of HipHop across the world began in a garage in Gloucestershire in 1985, at a friend's 14th birthday party, when he first heard *Street Sounds Electro Volume 9*. Not quite the Bronx maffia, but perhaps that makes it just as installable a starting point. His book takes it as a given that you can now find HipHop almost anywhere on the globe you care to look. "HipHop has hijacked mainstream culture (or do I mean the other way round?) and become all encompassing, influential and global. It is the worldwide urban soundtrack," writes Neate.

There you're at: strays around five major cities—New York, Tokyo, Johannesburg, Cape Town and Rio—unraveling HipHop's myriad mutations, permutations and complications.

It's a strangely unexplored subject, as Hua Hsu

noted in his review of the anthology *Global Noise: Rap And Hip-Hop Outside The USA* (The Wire 222). Neate's take on it is refreshingly subjective and personal, partly due no doubt to his background as a novelist. He loses me of open-minded travelogue, interviews, freestyle theorizing and thinking out loud is anything but academic in approach. That said, the attempts here to deal with some of the more lively cultural, racial and economic contradictions of the territory work towards progress. Reframing a host of diverse figures, from Joseph Stiglitz to Cheba Achrebe, Neate soon glimpses with the globalization of HipHop, the appropriation of the culture by multinational companies as a heavy signifier of 'cool', and the need for HipHop's "core consciousness of marginalized young people in cities worldwide" to remain if for themselves.

But every time he arrives in a new place, Neate finds he has to redraw his conclusions. In New York, he encounters a scene strangled by big business. Several people tell him of no uncertain terms that "HipHop is dead." At the Def Jam label offices, he finds the "soul gangster" E-1P

snapping in a chair: When he hears that Neate is "looking for what's up in NY HipHop," E-1P responds, "We're New York HipHop right here. And we're trying to jump tonight. Guess you may as well go home." Sure enough, Neate heads for Tokyo in the next chapter, and here's where the dance of sub cultural transactions that defines the reception and production of HipHop away from the US really begins. At U-Bey Park, Tokyo's annual HipHop festival, he conducts a quick rap pop in the crowd. Those with English tell him "We're representing," or "You gotta keep it real!" To which Neate loudly replies, "Keep what real?"

The two South African chapters on the townships of Johannesburg and Cape Town are more serious in tone, noting their findings deeper in history. Out on the vast tumbledown districts of the Cape Flats, Neate observes how HipHop often leads straight towards gang culture or offers an escape from it. He understandably scratches his head at the distortions caused by "buser wars on countless streets," as "young men who've never left Cape Town fight real wars over fatsoy fat in

mythological places with names like South Central and Compton and Brooklyn and the Bronx". The final chapter on Rio takes us to the favelas, where once again he remembers "off the HipHop track" to explore Brazil's past, and pays a visit to a community centre in Vigário Geral that perfectly embodies his ideal of HipHop as a medium for local protest.

Neate has written off more than his own chew in places—occasionally he almost thinks too hard, winking/limping in tortuous conceptual circles about "globalization" and the fluid nature of modern identity. He also leans too heavily on whatever bits of information he happens across during his travels. The choice of destinations also feels slightly arbitrary and whimsical, seeing how his itinerary skulks the shape of his arguments. Sometimes such arbitrariness leaves his book feeling like a work in progress. Tantalizing glimpses of the scenes in New Zealand, Tanzania and Zimbabwe suggest there's soon far to further book with an even wider scope. In the meantime, though, this is a manna for anyone with an interest in what's going on outside their front door. □

## SEDITION AND ALCHEMY: A BIOGRAPHY OF JOHN CALE TIM MITCHELL

BLACKBERRY POKI #12 99

BY MIKE DAVIES

Stretching over 40 years, John Cale's musical career has been remarkable, not least for its atonality and diversity. Tim Mitchell's biography reminds us just how singular his journey has been, recalling his beginnings as the adolescent musical prodigy in South Wales and the gifted student who, at Goldsmiths College, London, inspired his fellow students with underground works such as *La Monte Young's cacophonous X* for *Henry Henry*. Although he enjoyed formal composition—he joined young's Theater Of Eternal Music upon arriving in New York in 1963—Cale equally loved the whimsy of rock 'n' roll. Even the danger of overfamiliarity with The Velvet Underground cannot blunt the excitement of reading how Cale helped produce such a glorious, unprecedented

pile-up of high and low art when he formed the group with Lou Reed in 1965.

But arguably the most fascinating aspect of this book is Cale's erratic post-VU solo career. Mitchell highlights Cale's lack of self-confidence surrounding his switch to singer-songwriter and performer, which led to drink and drug-fueled performances of such extremity that Cale himself later described them as "gargylish". Liver damage and impending fatherhood prompted a cleanup in the 1980s, which brought his life into sharper focus.

*Sedition And Alchemy* follows closely on the heels of Cale's 1999 autobiography, *What's Hebe For?* (written in conjunction with Peter Bockens), and although undertaken with Cale's full cooperation—the writer had access to photographs, tapes, and lists and other information—he was presumably not granted an interview, the odd unspoken comment notwithstanding. Mitchell did interview a number of Cale's friends and associates but rather than

using block quotes to give a feeling of nuance, of atmosphere of place and time, he weaves most of the information into his narrative. Even Cale's VU colleague Les Fucker only gets to speak the odd line in her own words.

Any art or will were clearly to move along, speed, but ultimately this book is let down by the speed with which Mitchell sails through it. It's certainly not superficial—Mitchell's examination of Cale's relationship with his remote father is specially revealing—but at only 200-odd pages *Sedition And Alchemy* is too short and somewhat lacking in detail. Mitchell lets on that Salvador Dalí attended a Velvet Underground/Exploding Plastic Inevitable show and later told a Velvet screen shot. It would have been nice to know what he made of the show, and on what grounds he liked his own last. Dalí's is but one thread left hanging. Valerie Solanas's shooting of Warhol is accorded all of one line. This hasty curk in the author's style is exemplified by his description of Cale touring in

1981: "A typical Cale breakfast would be a six pack of beer, a quart of chocolate milk and strawberries. For lunch he would drink quarts of pea soup. The results were predictable..." But what were they?

Cale's music is generally well appreciated but even here there are lapses of detail. The strained relationship between Cale and Envo and how it impacted on the recording of their 1991 collaboration *Wrong Way Up* is portrayed with subtlety, but later records like the episodic *EasyKiss*—Cale's music to accompany some early Walter silent films—gets a cursory treatment. The book does powerfully with an email dialogue between Cale and his former guitarist Douglas Nikeles on 11 September 2001, during the attack on the World Trade Center included are some digital photos Cale took outside and invited to his friend before he was forced to evacuate the area. The section leaves you wishing that the preceding pages had contained such detail. □

# Cross Platform

Sound in other media. This month: Italian duo Tu m' guide Dan Warburton through the liquid borders between electronica, Improv, Duchampian readymades and video



Motto It is Emiliano Romanelli (left) and Rossano Poldoro aka Tu m' with stills from their video art

Though they're happy in the idyllic surroundings of a hilltop village "from where we can see most of central Italy", Tu m' – Rossano Poldoro, born in 1970, and Emiliano Romanelli, nine years his junior – have constantly set their sights further afield. The words "passion", "love" and "cousins" appear frequently in their email dispatches from Città Sant'Angelo, Pescara, where a shared love of new music brought the two together in 1998. "We liked Otomo Yoshitake, David Shea and Christian Marclay, that synthesis of all the music we loved, from cartoon soundtracks to Balinese gamelan." Though they both played guitars and saxophones in jazz and Improv outfits, a passion for sampling and cheap electronics eventually led to Tu m'. "Using samples is just part of it – not many people realise that the art of 'quotation' has been going on for a long time; it's not just a prerogative of 'digital' civilisation. Marcel Duchamp's concept of readymades influenced us a lot. We like to quote his observation that since all the colours an artist uses are ready-to-use manufactured products, all the paintings in his world are readymades. That seems to be a good summary of much of today's music." The name Tu m' itself refers to Duchamp's 1918 painting of the same name, which the artist described as "a kind of inventory of my preceding work rather than a painting in itself".

In barely three years Tu m' have made an impressive number of contacts in the world of electronic and improvised music, all the while downloading as much free software as they can get their hands on, far use on what they endearingly describe as "two old laptops, a little bit broken". "It may sound like a cliché," they continue, "but glitches represent for us a source of real innovation in the music of the new millennium. They affect both melody and rhythm in their deep structure, highlighting micro-variations that we explore. Structural faults are good starting points for our pieces – finding an 'error' in a loop or in a track is a wonderful surprise, and that error becomes a source for our ideas."

In 2001 their music came to the attention of Chris Cutler, who distributed their limited edition CD-R *Phone Book* in November of that year. The first "official" Tu m' album, *03*, appeared at the same time as Jason Kahn's *Cut Incom*. In June 2002 the Portuguese label Grain Of Sound released *Nine Songs*, and a double 3" CD *Blue In Green* appeared

three months later on Aesova. By the end of the year, two further Tu m' releases had appeared on ERS/Staalpost and BOXmedia.

"The Futurists, Varese, electronic and concrete music, but also jazz, Ambient and laptop music are all part of our background and cross-pollinate each other without our realising it. Our musical interests are always changing." Those interests range from noise, which Poldoro points out is "now accepted by audiences as part and parcel of the contemporary musical aesthetic" to pure pop. Though they describe their recent release on *FWT*, *Pop Involved*, as "simply investigating the pleasure of melody", it's a cunningly crafted piece of work, and like Fennesz's much-acclaimed *Endless Summer* (whose influence Tu m' affectionately acknowledge by calling one of the tracks "The End Of The Summer"), further proof that cutting edge electronic can appeal to a wide public without compromising its artistic integrity. "Playing good melodies can be as difficult as showing off your avant garde chops," Romanelli states. *Pop Involved* successfully manages to do both.

Parallel to their musical activities, Tu m' are increasingly involved in the world of video and site-specific installations, notably with artists Claudio Sannar, Bianco & Valente and Cane Capovilla. "Our visuals are an integral part of our work and they're closely linked to our music. You might say they represent our music made visible. In our videos, music and image find themselves in a confrontation whose ultimate goal is fusion into a unique entity. We believe that sound itself has strong components of matter that can be translated abstractly into forms and colours into the mind of the listener. Exhibitions are an opportunity for us to project our imagination into form in a neutral space, the gallery. We've noticed that many different and contrasting stylistic aspects live within us, from dada to Pop Art, from Optical Art to Neo Concretismo Inoggettualo Italiano. Antonio Calderara (1903-78) and Riccardo Guarnieri (born 1933) are two artists who have really inspired us. We love the chromatic choices they make in their works – really very intense. We see many young artists who are inspired, maybe without being aware of the fact, by the work of the great masters of the 1950s, people like Winfried Gaul, Frank Stella, Ellsworth Kelly and Ettore Spalletti. What these artists have in common is the fact that they work with a few colours, sometimes

just one. The colour really seems to go way beyond its representation, not merely communicating but plunging totally into the space surrounding us."

Curious to learn how other musicians could react to their visuals, Poldoro and Romanelli created the Web label Tu m'Pop to invite other musicians to compose soundtracks for their images. "The soundtracks are free download and everything is strictly non-profit. The reaction we've had from musicians from different areas has been great." The list of more than 120 musicians who have submitted material include not only electronic notables such as Scanner, Kim Cascone and DJ Spooky but also free improvisers as diverse in orientation as Bhob Rainey and Ned Rothenberg, and alternative guitar heroes David Grubbs and Alan Licht. Never content to sit on their hill and admire the view though, Rossano and Emiliano are still scouting for talent. "We'd like to work with Björk for us, she's one of the most intelligent artists of the past few years."

Tu m' also curate a CD-R label, Mr Must Records – another reference to Duchamp, who signed his infamous 1917 readymade Fountain "R Must". Following the first release, Scanner's *PublicPhone*, discs are forthcoming from TV Pop, Nathan Michel, Donna Summer and Christopher Willis. Three further Tu m' albums are due out shortly: *Pink Shark* (Phtalio) showcases Poldoro's and Romanelli's "passion for 80s disco and pop", while Tu m' And The Magical Mystery Orchestra (Aesova) is the pair's homage to minimalism, a project realised in collaboration with an ensemble of classical instruments, whose polished Reichian sonorities are then refracted through the prism of the Tu m' laptops. Later this summer they will also reveal an interest in muscular sounds on the extraordinarily beautiful *Broken, Distant, Fragrant*, the result of "a long year exchanging recordings by mail" with Californian sound artist Steve Roden. The sheer diversity and creativity of their work is remarkable, and Poldoro and Romanelli show no sign of letting up. "We're really full of music, both to listen to and to realise, and we're always short of time. We're really very curious." □ Pop Involved and Tu m' And The Magical Mystery Orchestra are out this month on *AWT/Fenne* and *Aesova* respectively. *Broken, Distant, Fragrant*, with Steve Roden is out next month on *Russell*. Tu m' Website: [www.tu-m.com](http://www.tu-m.com)



Still from Nikk Cave's *God Is In The House* DVD (left); and *The Dawn Of DMI* (right)

## NICK CAVE AND THE BAD SEEDS

**GOD IS IN THE HOUSE**  
MUTE DVD/CD/DVD  
BY LOUISE GRAY

Concert footage often was the risk of being a pretty patchy affair, and it might be with this caveat in mind that Nick Cave and The Bad Seeds have fought any of leading a hungry market with endless video (and now DVD) footage. With the exception of UK M Schappell's *The Road to God Knows Where* (1990) — a road movie more than anything — and *Live At The Paradise* (1992), there's been little to fix The Seeds on film.

All of which makes the concert footage, documentary and videos of the 140 minute *God Is In The House* timely marking a transition between material and personal. The DVD centres around Cave's 2001 gig at Liverpool's Transoceanic, soon after the release of *No More Shall We Part*. It's possible to suggest this album, along with its predecessor *The Boatman's Call*, as one where the dramatic hell of Cave's songwriting turns towards a quieter form of confession. Now this alters the dynamic of the concerts isn't really effective: the release goes for a simple and effective balance between the grand gospel of, say, "Red Right Hands" and a howling "Saint Hilaria," and later material such as "Into My Arms." Watch out, too, for "The Mercy Seat," a song that's been blowing down over the years, though consistently shifting and settling its edgy balance.

The release also commemorates the presence and presence that guitarist/wild card Billie Baird brought to the group. Baird, who recently left The Bad Seeds after 20 years to join an Ennio Morricone band and solo projects, is just one genial character on John Hillcoat's 45 minute studio documentary on the recording of *No More Shall We Part*. It's an affectionate piece that favors the sessions with not just wit, but also a consistent trickster and tobacco. For the three promo videos that end, Hillcoat, who's been filming Cave since *Ghosts... Of The Civil Dead*, pulls in a range of visual

references that echoes like Gregory Crewdson in their eerie hyperreality. They are not self-consciously artful so much as vignettes that capture something of the staging power of Cave's live performance. And also the way humour the line-dancing sequence of "Fifteen Feet Of Pure White Snow," with guest appearances from James Corden and (in a nod to Cave's Kyle days) Jason Donovan, as in its own way a minor surrealistic masterpiece.

**ANTON CORBIJN**  
**SOME YOYO STUFF:**  
**DON VAN VLIET DVD**  
MUSIC VIDEO DISTRIBUTION/CD/DVD  
BY BRIAN DILLON

Anton Corbijn's luminous tribute to Don Van Vliet aka Captain Beefheart ("an observation of his obsessions") is a decade old and, at 13 minutes running time, will work a shelf full of subsequent serious biographical research. Its opening shot shows the subject's mother plant a little out-on Don in the desert, as if to suggest that the "belated," referring to Corbijn is both a fairly iconic symbolization of his former self and a very real presence noted in the *Mojave*: a desert-visionary painter and (on the video evidence here) gloriously hilarious raconteur.

Corbijn frames Van Vliet's fragile stances with striking desiccations and two Captain Beefheart tracks ("What Are We Gonna Do With You?" and "Evening Bird"), but it's his speaking voice that lingers. There's what has sounded the Captain's flighty whoops and hollers, but his halting delivery still swerves into gravelled, lucid insistence on a single syllable: "the fish I used on the cover of  *Trout Mask Replica* stank so bad... Humans are so meat!" He's also a pure joy to watch: puffing on his cigar or suddenly executing one of those apocalyptic, sweeping arm gestures that were the essence of his stage presence.

Which is not to say that *Some Yoyo Stuff* is a mere water for post-1982 Beefheart, evidence of a somewhat half-life lived out after the fact. Here too is Van Vliet the artist and desert prophet, formulating "new" aphorisms ("when you suck little things, it makes your fingers feel

delightful") and a blatantly generous tribute to his peers ("he was the only Frank Zappa I knew"). His desert retreat may be legendary (its imagery overlaid by Corbijn), but depicted U2 bearded and blinking in the same territory, but this is an artist still with an eye and ear outside his own myth: "I'd like to tell you people watching and listening... BOO!"

**ERKKI KURENNIEMI**  
**THE DAWN OF DIMI**  
KINOTAR KINO/CD/DVD  
BY KEN HOLLINGS

Digital space is probably the last and best refuge we shall ever have from the burden of the past. Deciding what to take with you into the vast reaches of an empty cosmos, and particularly which sounds and images will be allowed to deftly keep enough to form an accompaniment to such a journey is both a cleansing and an unsettling process. Suddenly less is more. Seen literally from the perspective of eternity, meanings and values become interchangeable. According to Finnish electronic arts pioneer Erkki Kurenniemi, however, the one thing we most likely to leave behind us is ourselves in the documentary strand of this excellent DVD release, a masterful portrait of the artist as cyborgist by film maker Mika Jussila entitled *Future Is Not What I Used To Be*. Kurenniemi is shown obsessively taping and photographing the details of his daily life not just against the run of some future destiny but to show the inhabitants of space what it meant to be human being in the latter part of our earthbound existence. To Kurenniemi, it seems entirely possible that humanity will eventually be left more as a strand of code, a digitized spark of consciousness desperate to discover for itself the facts of physical existence. Such an activity reveals the long-term humility and waiting intellectual pride of the true visionary.

A man who has pursued the pencil paths of technology, acoustics, philosophy, composer and artist since the early 1960s, Kurenniemi has done more than build electronic instruments and create scenes for them; he has developed means

for people to interact with audiovisual programming outside the box, as it were. DMI is an acronym for 'Digital Musical Instrument' but it only tells part of the story. Alongside such technological marvels of the late 1960s as the 'Acromatic' synthesizer and the 'Electric Quartz', a forearm device created to facilitate collective composition, Kurenniemi was also formulating the interactive strategies required in the early 1970s for the DIM-0 ('Digital Music Instrument, Optical Input'), which allowed video signals to trigger sounds, and the DIM-3 (aka 'The Seaphone'), designed to use skin conductivity and tactile pressure to generate music. These and other technical singularities are captured in a beautifully designed gallery of images and statements, together with such fabulous examples of the devices in action as the 1971 recording *Don Suber*, complete with Kurenniemi's own videotaped introduction, and *Dear*, a reconstruction of a multimedia performance from the same year. The whole package comes with a wide range of valuable extras. As well as Jussila's documentary, available with or without English subtitles, and *Pan Sarcos* 50 minute live tribute recorded at the Nuncio Theatre in Helsinki last year using Kurenniemi's original instruments, there's also a dwindling selection of unfinished start films and soundtracks left over from the mid-1990s. With numerous such points of intersection available, *The Dawn Of DMI* does for Erkki Kurenniemi what Benda's *Adaptation Research* did for Raymond Scott. As such it promises to be a byword for undiscovered genius and weird history for many years to come. Life in space would be unthinkable without it.

**VENICE BIENNALE: DREAMS AND CONFLICTS - THE DICTATORSHIP OF THE VIEWER**  
**VENICE ARSENALE**  
ITALY

BY LINA CANTERINO RUSSELL

The international art world which descended on Venice this June quickly realized two



Bar's Archive - Endangered Waters at the Venice Biennale

thing: this 50th Biennale was the largest to date, and it was the hottest opening week – tapping 40 degrees – in its history. Not a compelling combination for those toasting across 11 giant exhibitions, 83 national pavilions and hundreds of events and performances scattered across town.

Questioning the validity of a single curatorial voice, this year's overall Biennale curator Francesco Bonami (Chicago Museum of Contemporary Art) attempted to embrace a multiplicity of voices, contexts and regions, and crafted the entire Biennale Dreams And Conflicts – The Dictatorship Of The Viewer out of a wish to delegate some power to the spectator. Eight guest-curated thematic exhibitions that loosely divided into geographical regions took over the sprawling Arsenal, a gigantic converted shipyard and one of the two main Biennale sites.

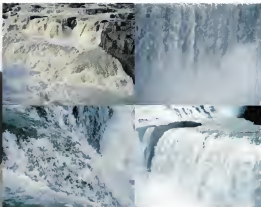
Individual Systems, curated by Slovenian Igor Zabel, was among the strongest. Mostly showing work by artists from Eastern and Central Europe, Zabel's show focused on the complex relationship between ordered systems in technology, knowledge, society and culture and what we perceive as modernity. Seeking out artists who develop highly complex systems in their quest for order in the world, Zabel's exhibition featured 15 works by the likes of conceptual group Art & Language, Mario Pichler (also known for his collaborations with Carsten Nicolai) and the Slovenian avant garde group IRWIN.

IRWIN, alongside Laibach, theatre/performance

group Cosmokinetic Cabinet Nocturne and design department Nova Kolektivizem (New Collectivism), are part of the Slovenian artists' collective Neue Slowenische Kunst. NSK has been working on its series *Vina za Kunst* (What Is Art) for over 30 years, and this exhibition saw a systematic retrospective analysis featuring the main subjects of IRWIN's icons. Five rows of painted 'icons' formed a grid arranged according to the subjects (Cross, Sower, Malware Between Two Wars, Deer and Cup Of Coffee). On the opposing wall each subject had a corresponding sound 'painting' – black frames with a speaker mounted in the middle with the voice of a narrator discussing the corresponding 'icons'.

Another impressive comment on belief, identity and faith was Czech artist Pavel Mikeš's piece *A Prayer Of PAVLOV*. Mikeš's mesmerizing video showed the mechanical repetition of the movements of a robot in a car factory, set to a layered soundtrack of a Buddhist chant.

Conceived as a project space rather than an exhibition, Utopia Station, the brainchild of curator Hans Ulrich Obrist, artist Robert Riva and art historian Molly Nesbit stood conceptually miles apart from the rest of the Biennale due to its intentional tentability and process-based nature. Sprawling across a hanger-like space, the building was filled with large circular bench units designed by Rirkrit Tiravanija and Liam Gillick surrounding purpose-built performance/installation spaces. Hundreds of artists



contributed, including Menna Abramovic, Yoko Ono, Matthew Barney, Patti Smith, Carsten Nicolai and Angela Bullock, alongside architects, writers and performers. In truth, many of the contributions were practically impossible to locate amidst the orchestrated chaos of the improvised activities which often did not happen on time or in the place they were supposed to. But for those determined to seek out Utopia Station offshoots via radio waves, the internet, around Venice and through a programme of events and screenings, Utopia Station revealed itself to be worth the extra effort. Many of the artists contributed posters, performances, sound works or objects that were easy to miss in a sea of literature and pamphlets (such as Philippe Perren's *Door Handles*, Ann Selk's *Parasols*, Leif Eggegen and CM Van Housel's *The Assassination Of Utopia By The Kloggers Of England*, Vargeland, and a special edition of Thomas More's *Utopia*.) Yoko Ono's contribution, *Imagine Peace*, consisted of a room and a rubber stamp with the word "Peace" which visitors were invited to stamp all over a world map, as well as a transcript of a spoken piece she once made with John Lennon, *Declaration Of Utopia* (Utopia being a conceptual country that has "no land, no boundaries, no passports, only people"). Like a playground built for overgrown children, Utopia Station stood as a symbol of a continued reassessment of elusive utopian visions and a starting point for activism and discussion.

Over at the leafy Giardini, which houses the

national pavilions where each country selects its supposed best in a grandiose display of national pride, Icelandic female artist Run showed an impressive sound installation *Archive – Endangered Waters*. Consisting of images of 52 waterfalls positioned around a purpose-built steel frame, visitors were invited to slide out one photograph at a time, simultaneously releasing the sound of their particular waterfall. The gallery sporadically filled with the magnificent roar of waterfalls only to suddenly become engulfed in complete silence.

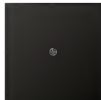
The Nordic countries provided an oasis of sound works through several live events during the opening weeks. Like Nordic Pavilion (Finland, Norway and Sweden) launched a CD entitled *Electric Loam* with an electrifying new noise blast by Maya Burley's and Heidi Sofia Tappola's outfit *Femal*. The following night, Finland's Pan Sonic provided an escape from the unbearable heat with an exceptional performance staged in an old church across Venice using instruments designed by the electronic pioneer Erkki Kluunerni.

Curator Bonami's notion of the dictatorship of the viewer began to feel somewhat comical while watching the sweaty art folk struggle to make sense of the colossal circus that the Biennale has become. The physical aspect of the largest art exhibition in the world was so uncomfortable to the majority of visitors this year that regardless of the art hanging on the walls, the pavilions which had installed air conditioning emerged the clear winners. □



# The Inner Sleeve

Artwork selected this month by Stanley Donwood



## CRASS CHRIST – THE ALBUM

CRASS RECORDS 1982  
DESIGNED BY GISE VLACHOU

It's very difficult to choose a favorite record sleeve. I narrowed it down to Crass. Then I chose this box set. Gise Vlachou's artwork is incredible — not just her work for Crass, but for the magazine *International Anthem*. Her work perfectly encapsulated the Crass ethic — she made pictures, graphics, icons, posters — all of which took the music to new levels. Fiercely political in the way we need to be today, the technical mastery of blending Renaissance art, beautifully rendered pencil and painted artwork with photography was fucking unbelievable. The stations of the Crass are there still. Your brain stops at one of them. Stanley Donwood is an artist and graphic designer, best known for his album artwork for *Rapin' Jesus*.



## Go To:



"What shall we do with 60 seconds? If 60 seconds is all that is left, what shall we do with such short period of time?" How significant can 60 seconds be? asks *Sleepwork*, a collective based in Hong Kong, formed in May 2002 by Ke-wai Chiu (aka aka, aka) and Pak-to Yip (aka *Forematters*). *60 Seconds*

([www.60seconds.org](http://www.60seconds.org)) is an open project inviting audio and visual artists based around the world to submit a minute's selection of time in an instant-turnover digital culture. Artists such as triphonic turntable player Jerrek Schaefer, Norwegian noise/rock Lasse Mathias and a whole raft of others have contributed one-minute MP3s.

The US-based *Illegal Art* ([www.illegal-art.org](http://www.illegal-art.org)) collective have updated their Website to contain free music, poster art, collages and video in abundance. Classic plunderphonics is available for download: *Negative Land*, *People Like Us*, *Culticide*, *The Evolution Control Committee*, *John Oswald*, *Tapewalkers*, *Sturm*, *Invited*, *Slothead Plink*, all to be found on the *Illegal Art* CD which has been circulating at various anti-copyright events over the past few years.

Amidst the excellent clips and articles, there's a fascinating history of copyright court cases, which includes samples of the tracks in question so you can hear for yourself: *Wire* versus *Elastica* (*Elastica's* "Connection" shares the opening of *Wire's* "Get Rhythmic"), *Queen & David Bowie* versus *Vanilla Ice* ("Under Pressure"/"Ice Ice Baby"), and the saga of *2 Live Crew*, who made a parody of Roy Orbison's "Pretty Woman", a case which reached the Supreme Court.

**Fat Cat Records** has set up an extremely useful, no nonsense *DIV Resource* ([www.fatcat.co.uk/DIV/](http://www.fatcat.co.uk/DIV/)). Containing addresses and links to manufacturing/planters, mastering studios, musicians' unions, copyright agencies, publishers, shops, databases, and other resources, the site functions as an A-Z of how to set up your own label and/or release your own music. Follow the "Best Cases" link to find information on how it's done: Interviews with a host of independent labels and artists, such as Tigerbait, *Bratley Welcomes Careful Drivers*, *Goodspeed*, *Hvattak*, *Indul*, *Jewelled Arder Collective* and others.

### Experimental e-zine *Incursion*

([www.incursion.org](http://www.incursion.org)) has had a facelift. Browse through the archives with interviews with Sussan Deyhim and Vladislav Delay among others, and browse the healthy amount of reviews of core and obscure avant garde music releases, updated regularly.

Want to be a music critic but can't take the heat? Just type in an artist name and description (from a multiple choice), and let **Robot Rock Critic** ([www.unksychoices.com/rock/](http://www.unksychoices.com/rock/)) come up with an album title and a ready-made review. Sample: "Francisco López At Carnegie Hall: It's his most powerful outing in quite a while. Every chord change on Francisco López's single 'A, Demon Locked My Storm' will break your heart. This music is leather clad and melodic. The strength of this album is its Black Sabbath-inspired fury. It's the best thing I've heard since 1987. The most auspicious out in the 15 minute Prog rock epic, 'I'm A Slave For You'. What's uncharacteristic is how self-aware his trademark mudily-produced power beats have gotten? Why do we bother?"

ANNE HILDE NESEY

# On Location

Live and kicking: festivals, concerts, events in the flesh



## SONAR 2003 BARCELONA CCCB

BY BEN BORTHWICK, ANNE HIDE NESBIT  
AND ROB YOUNG

So there it is. Sonar has reached its tenth year and with an audience figure higher than ever (reportedly around 90,000 over three days). Embedded within the heart of Barcelona, its character is still unique among European events: its audience reactive and tolerant (of the high temperatures, lack of on-site food, of the simultaneous appearances of multi-set acts at different stages), having begun alongside the birth of 90s electronic/DI culture, with all the impermanence that went with that, 2003's event was notable for the amount of reinvigorated performance by occasionally singular acts, rather than the global collective consciousness of yore.

Norwich was that more vividly illustrated than in the undisputed high of the first day, a showcase of artists on the Oakland-based Artsonic label. Itself, featuring Dose One — of the nasal delivery and theatre student's exaggerated gurgles — are masters of *Hyper* noises. Dose's sassy vocals, sometimes scolded through a vocoder, express a kind of bioelectronic, exhausted wisdom. The machine beats aren't programmed; they're typed in by key, and given added ke-ing on keyboards by member Dose, formerly of Electric Birds. *Night* after, Sage Francis emerges for a solo set accompanied only by his faithful backing vocals on CD. Before a word has been spoken, he steps off his jacket, docks himself in a stars and stripes flag on which the stars have been replaced by familiar corporate logos, and proceeds to list himself with his own belt. Francis's set is all about atonement: in an hour of acrobatics, he makes a direct apology for the actions of his own President, and raps about various aspects of betrayal: by government, by his ex-wife, by *Hyper* itself. Rarely does rap achieve such seamy, psychotic and self-mocking tones.

Sonar by night has always been a problematic part of the festival, and this year the heat, crowd numbers and appalling transport arrangements helped it reach fabled proportions. Björk, headlining the second night, kept thousands stewing in the clammy air for an hour and a half while her stylist reported a shortage of outfit forgoers at the hotel. When she appeared, with her raw regular accompanists Matmos, Zena Parikins and

Laila, despite a stage filled with flaring pyrotechnics and video screens, she was hard pressed to make an impact on anyone more than 500 rows back. She had, at least, earlier appeared live in a more intimate club at one of Sonar's low-key tenth anniversary parties. The best moment of this was listening to one DJ build a pounding techno set to announce Jeff Mills, only for the Detroit producer to come on and drop James Brown's "Hot Pants".

Wern's Philip Quehenberger is one part shy geek pushing buttons, one part rock star incarnate. During the Cheap Records showcase, he stood behind his keyboards with pedals scattered around his feet looking greasy and pallid, while occasionally delivering arctic vocals with a dynamic snarl. Each time he introduced a new loop, he allowed the rest of the track to settle around it, then dropped an effect that drew its power into a whole new register of subtle. His singing perfectly offset the dissonance of the beats while the keyboards filled the atmosphere into a stage, improvised jazz. Over at the Mega showcase, Pita Rehag and Tina Frank made a ferocious team. Pita's conspiring laptop detonations, occasionally sending tremors spelling savagely up your femurs, were set to Frank's explosive digital visuals — spins looping and crashing in on themselves, sucking you into a caustic black hole.

Quehenberger typified a very desirable strain of artistic eccentricity that made this year's Sonar one of the most memorable. The pure crowd-pleasing comedy straight out of kids' weekend TV, the music producer of Super-Duper! vocalist Jamie Leell, playing in a solo capacity the year, is a wonder to behold. Anyone who's not yet witnessed Leell in full flow is in for a treat. He dresses to disgust, wild mad-god hairdon, single orange pillow, too-high shoulder pads. Remarkably for an Englishman in his twenties, he possesses a soul voice that in honey like Sly Stone or Prince, and a heartening talent to make Muhammad Ali quake in his Everlast. Leell constructs his tracks live, voicing and layering rhythmic backdrops in front of your eyes, effortlessly whipping them out of the air and forging them into ringing electro riffs and distorted funk grooves. His manic set is deployed through vocoders, and his real-time arranging follows chaotic but gripping patterns. When he invites Matthew Herbert and Arto Lindsay, no less, on stage for an impromptu jam, the result is an unforgotten jumble, with Arto goading around on a chair and rocking out like a dorky Mick Ronson and whatever Herbert's doing never penetrating above an encroaching wall of noise. It's a mess, and they know it. It's a self-adulgence that, washed down with some boyish

juke de vino, doesn't cause too much upset. In the same space, Kevin Bleckman, aka Kratin Enckson, also cranked up the lysians with her wiry hairband, shrill satire. Following the old Bleckman from Bleckman favorite "Bad Music", and other ditties that sound like 1950s "fat girl" light operatics, she's joined on stage by a pyromaniac DJ, however, she ends with a cover of Whitney Houston's "I Will Always Love You", which she refuses to conclude, drawing it out into false ending after false ending, each time notching up a key until she's squealing derisively, obsessively at the zenith of her anger.

Norwegian label Telld also played the eccentric, dazed label boss/Ol' Bjorn Torkse has a penchant for cartoon penguins in his sleeve art, and stuck a fifty one on stage during his DJ sets. The tongue-in-cheek Nannoroid the DJ, dressed as straightforward mechanics, peddle a schtick that's a robotic pin in the sea. The duo of Kaptein Kaliber have a free line in campy/die Big Beat, doing with a huge guitar riff over a crumpling techno bass that was perfectly pitched as the sea headed down towards the skyline.

Inside the CCCB centre, Native Instruments showcased their software with performances from Eronnith and Phoenixa. While Eronnith's sparse rhythmic architecture can sound confined on CD, over a serious sound system it was fascinating. The whole performance was like a forensic examination of the hidden information on Eronnith's laptop. Schematic said Phoenixa took a different approach by slowly assembling microelements into accelerating rhythms, then imperceptibly slowing down, setting the pulse arith until it reached a point of dissolution, from which a new process would begin. This process occurred again and again until the track became a thicket of dense polythymy.

Jacksonmer and Sir Superman's creaky role set opened a showcase by Dase label! Smalltown Supersound, followed by musician/designer Kim Horthing, who began quietly with a couple of intimate tracks composed of woodblock rhythms and a folky organ. He welcomed the perennial coarseness of making electronic music interesting on stage with disarmingly genuine excitement. Commanding the audience to their feet by waving his arms, he suddenly launched a barrage of Acid beats and began leaping around behind the gear. With his skinny features and entirely soulful facial hair he resembled some mythical Nordic wood man as he transformed intimate, rasping folk structures into "Acidcore" breakouts.

In the affable underground Hall, Jaga Jaga's

fusion blowout was a breath of fresh Baltic air. Many of the tented tracks are heavily punctuated with sharp interruptions or pauses for breath while a horn, guitar, or vibas comes the melody, only to explode into life again at a more frantic pace. Drummer and nominal leader Martin Hornbush's huddling drum "b" bass rhythms or gossamer breakdowns occasionally spray out a fine jet of beats which the rest of the group scramble to play, like parody fusion.

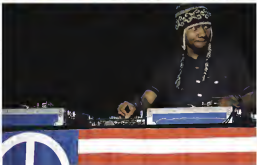
Anyone coming to Sonar to get a grip on the local scene can have their work cut out. The few Spanish acts included in the programme performed at additional times, usually too early to garner much of a crowd. Crematorio, a Spanish no-input moving band and prepared guitar duo on the Barcelona-based Artsonic label, struggled against the bawling acoustics in the hall empty MACBA hall. Sadly, all dived as their improved performance disappeared as their Keith Rowe influenced guitar plucks hardened between concrete walls and pillars.

The annual multimedia exhibition, Sonemabau, was a best of from the last ten years. Carsten Nicolai's *Sensuato Noto* infinity, shown here in 1998, consists of a pair of headphones, four turntables, and four transparent 10's containing a total of 48 locked grooves. The spectator can piece together any of the loops using the turntables and customise a unique mix. Apart from the extensive flat art on show (including Jaga, Tarkenton, Nannoroid, Artson and John Meade), a graphic design retrospective (Tomato, Non-Format, Die Gestalten, Designes Republic and more), there were curated theatrical pieces, videos and a slide show displaying photos taken at the festival over the past ten years.

At next door's MACBA centre, Francisco López's sound installation *Dos Espíritus Maños* (Two [Blind] Spirits) included a surround sound piece that demanded its audience to be blindfolded and looked into a glass mask (not surprisingly, impressive). Sonar couples were soon using it as an orgy room. American "archimono", Mark Baine installed *Suspension*, an enormous, globular inflatable speaker which juked up and amplified the Earth's seismic tremors. In parallel, the CCCB was hosting an excellent exhibition entitled *Tiask Culture* — The Potholes Of Taste. Examining the fledgling relationship between trash and avant garde, the exhibition featured sections on trashshows, scholasticism, Ed Wood, and appealing soap operas, as well as a music section juxtaposing Dennis Johnson, The Shaggs, William S. Burroughs, a 1960s yodelling couple, Henry and others. So that was ten years of Sonar! From the stars to the gutter, they've got just about everything covered. □

Clockwise from top left: Björk, Jaga Jaga, Jaga Jaga, Jamie Leell with Matt Herbert and Arto Lindsay, Kevin Bleckman with Kratin, Sage Francis, Dose One of Thomastone

On Location



**MELTDOWN: MICHAEL FRANTI & SPEARHEAD + THE SUN RA ARKESTRA + DJ SPOOKY**  
LONDON ROYAL FESTIVAL HALL

BY PHIL ENGLAND

As part of the Lee Perry-curated Meltdown festival, tonight's show brought together three contrasting acts representing different currents of dissent in contemporary black America. DJ Spooky looked the evening off playing without the aid of headphones and with his

dangling woolly hat bobbing over his two turntables, moose-earrings bob and twine draped in a CND-symbol-and-stripes flag. Spearhead of his social-political theorizing, this Spooky as choice black music selector running Bob Marley next to drum 'n' bass, HiHoep and Mosy Elliott remixes.

Generally Spooky adopts the most simple formula: let one deck run an entire track while using the other to scratch with, and when the record comes to an end hit the "throwing reverse" button to give you just enough time to change the record. More mainstream selections were treated with wilder and more dissonant deck and effects work and the set peaked with the DJ moving deftly back and forth between

drum solos on two jazz records, creating an extended solo of his own. Introducing The Sun Ra Arkestra, he declared: "We've got to write a detailed script for this review we call Planet Earth."

Even without the "Telemonk Monk on Planet 9" style meditations of their late leader, it is heartening to see the Arkestra continuing Sun Ra's legacy. Robbed in unique glittering costumes and individual hats, the crew are ready to take us on a journey from ancient Egypt to outer space. Band leader Marshall Allen's tenors and arrangements maintain the trademark mark of exuberant ragged swing. African percussion and dissonant megalomantic transportation, but the guitar playing of Bruce Edwards and vocals of Art

Jenkins bring new ingredients to the pot. "We Travel The Spaceways" has a childlike simplicity, as does their delight in experiment. Their set peaks with an expensive exorcism of Sun Ra's recent flight from the planet.

It's odd, in a way that Michael Franti and Spearhead should get top billing (although The Arkestra travel less to an intimate second set after the concert on the balcony floor). Franti has now cast himself as a barefoot, wide-eyed, modern soul-searcher poet. But Spearhead's jazzy, exuberantly soft funk is doubtless a little too cheesy for the self-respecting Wire reader. On "Bomb the World" Franti asks, "How many songs it takes for you to see/you can bomb the world to pieces/you can't bomb it into peace." □

Clockwise from top left: Tricky, Lee "Scratch" Perry in person and as scratch, DJ Spooky, Michael Franti, The Arkestra

**MELTDOWN: TRICKY + LEE "SCRATCH" PERRY + THE MAD PROFESSOR**  
LONDON ROYAL FESTIVAL HALL

BY DAVID SIBBES

Do paper what a live-up, what a dub melding of nonconformist minds. The Mad Professor (aka Neil Frazier), who through his remixes of Prince Scream and Massive Attack has done more than anyone to popularize, amplify and expand the principles of dub reggae in the UK in recent years. Tricky, whose moment of epiphany occurred when he realized that to discover himself and his potential he was going to have to give up the security of sitting with his Bristol crew and make his own footsteps. And the legendary Lee "Scratch" Perry whose untiring,

available experiments in dub at his Black Ark Studio in Kingston came at the cost of his own sanity but who has survived, sufficiently intact to control the Royal Festival Hall's annual Meltdown festival this year.

It doesn't quite work out, unfortunately. The Mad Professor's set is well up to the normal standard, bouncing and reverbierating as the sparsely fixed upward. Were this a low-oilaged, 800-capacity venue, this would blow your ears off and swell your heart to twice its size. However, in the indifferent hanger of this hall the party vibe is derailed.

With Tricky there's a significant surge to the front, followed by that near-immediate and arking sense of disappointment familiar to those who have come back to him time and again, hoping he'll repay the lingering goodwill he

built up with 1995's *Maxinquaye*. He's got a new singer, Cosentino Francavilla, and a group who tend towards the looser funk-beat that worked brilliantly on Tricky's cover of "Black Steel in the Hour of Chaos" but which here functions as a mere musical default setting.

The dark, blurring tones of "Overcome" (another Maxinquaye gem) are delivered effectively enough, though unfortunately this simply emphasizes the contrast between Tricky then and Tricky now. The problem is Tricky himself: he is an art-people-at-center-stage, a totem at best, his white trousers luminous enough but his face shadowed. One could be generous and suggest that Tricky is emulating Mike Dink, who deliberately throughout his career turned inward and away from audiences as a reproach to the expectations of black

musicians as larger-than-life, public-friendly entertainers. But at least Mike made the odd sound. All that emerges from Tricky is an occasional, inorganic wheeze, though in fact performers who talked to him outside say he's lost his voice. For any other artist, that would preclude performing altogether, but maybe Tricky can get away with it because he is a singer, a symbol, rather than a player. Is there any substance left to him?

The presence of Meltdown curator Lee "Scratch" Perry waddling on to "Ghetto youth" only adds to a sense of confusion and disorientation, with the Mad Professor on the rising deck trying to lost proceedings into something halfway substantial. In a just, rather than a awful world, the Prof — not Tricky — would have topped the bill tonight. □

**ROCKET FROM THE TOMBS**  
NEW YORK CITY VILLAGE UNDERGROUND

BY ALAN UCHT

This is a sort of the last reunion concert one could ever have expected to see. Rocket From The Tombs have been a longstanding rock legend; formed in Cleveland in the early 70s, they only documented one up featured later Pete Ubu founded Peter Laughner and David Thomas, and Future Dead Bays Chevelle Chrome (known as Gene O'Connor at the time) and Johnny Bliz (aka Madamsky). Thomas was eventually replaced on vocals by Bob (then Stone) Bators, and then the group broke up. Laughner died in 1977, and for years Thomas steadfastly refused to discuss Rocket or consider releasing their solo, incredible four-track demo tape, which consolidated among underground traders. The music on that 1975 demo falls right between The Stooges, The Velvet, Roy Mars, Black Sabbath and of

course the future music of its members, much of which originated in Rockets set.

Besides the demo, most of which was released on CD last year (*The Day The Earth Rotted From The Tombs*), there are several surviving publicly photos from 1975, which is how I've always pictured the group — typically kinetic pre-rock soldiers. So imagine my surprise as bassist Craig Bell scurried onstage, a dead grin for the father on the 80s alien-orientated sitcom *Ali*. A bald Cheetha Chrome, assembling either the line artist John Johnson or Peter Garrett of Midnight Oil (take your pick) followed, while Thomas looked like he was freshly sprung from a biting parody on *The Jonathan Winters Show*. Frankly in for Laughner on second guitar is Television's Robert Lyle (Rocket opened for Television in Cleveland back in the day) — wearing a gaudy satin shirt, he looked (and sounded) pretty sharp. Current Ubu drummer Steve Mahman replaced the absent Bliz.

Thomas announced that he was wearing his "Tom Verlane shirt" (no doubt in the hope of getting a rise out of Lloyd), and then decided to be bothered to sing the opening song, "Frustration". Or maybe that was the concept: "Frustration" the faithful by just standing there with your mouth closed, staring at the ceiling. Thomas was back on the mic for the second song, "So Cold". A great variation on Alice Cooper's "I'm Eighteen". Cheetha sang Laughner's "An't It Fun" and did a more than credible job, effectively capturing the song's pointed irony (which Al Rose couldn't manage on Gene M Rodes' version). Craig Bell stepped up to sing his own "Leon Gene" homage, "Muckin'". While Thomas mouthed the words, off-mic, into Cheetha's face. Mahman proved himself to be a powerhouse on the version of "30 Seconds Over Tokyo". The rest of the set hit the other highlights of their 70s songbook, effectively replicating the originals (as should be expected) "Some Reducer", "Never Gonna Kill Myself Again" (which became The

Dead Boys' "Caught With The Meat In Your Mouth"), "Amphetamine", "Down In Flames" and "Final Solution".

They encore, even after the audience blew the Civil War trivia question Thomas asked them to answer in order to get on stage, with "Lila Blinks", which is surely missing the Astoria origin almost away from us Thomas in the original demo version. Frankly, I preferred Thomas' overal in the original Rocket recordings; 30 years of singing experience is not necessarily a good thing, and he seemed to be having difficulty connecting with the material — not surprising, since he ditched the group's *Wooey Metal* influence after the unit split. I suppose one can't expect him to channel his 20-year old self to deliver (just he found meaningful) back then. But this was really as satisfying as rock musicians get. I just wish I'd been at their show the night before, when John Morris (aka the Electric Eels, another legendary Cleveland proto-punk outfit) played with his current outfit. □

## FAUST BERLIN VOLKSBUHNE GERMANY

BY KIRAHANE KHABIZI

At one point early on in Faust's performance at the Volksbühne in East Berlin—in what's rumored to be their final live appearance—Werner Diermaier spins several coils with a symbol over his shoulder, resembling a shot-putter contemplating the moment at which to release a throw. When he finally decides to halt his athletic twirling and use the percussive element in his hand, he swings it into a large, hanging sheet of metal. Diermaier's action sums up the essence of Faust on stage: you can hear and see the group contemplating how far they can hurt sound forward into sonic configurations. The members of the group maintain their space from one another in concert, yet they manage to produce music with perfect coherence, music that

lunges ahead as a whole. The steadily shifting organ elements support the noise of crashing metal objects while drum beats occasionally emerge from the mix to reveal a spiking rhythm that unexpectedly pulls it all together.

The only founding member of Faust appearing with the group besides Diermaier, keyboardist Hans Joachim Limpl, begins the concert with whirling, ethereal chords, as stand-in bassist Ingo Vask of Soft Cell/Gel cautiously adds his own subdued musical ingredient to the opening. Meanwhile, the members of Faust who joined the group since it reformed in the 1990s begin to punctuate the progression of sound with resonant contributions. Percussionist Lars Peukstadt sits cross-legged inside a circle of hanging metal pipes, which he uses to produce both hard stiles and tumbling sweeps. Steven Wey Lyobell blends in distorted licks from his guitar, but it's clear from their onstage presence

that Diermaier and Limpl have the most control over where the music will go. The two original members behave differently during the performance—Diermaier breathes as much as Limpl smiles—but they share a similar confidence in their musical approach. When Diermaier lowers a heavy chain onto a metal bench he creates a decisively articulated series of small collisions. When Limpl presses darker tones from his keyboard he persuasively alters the entire consistency of Faust's music.

For an institution that hails back to the early 1970s, albeit after taking a long break and variously shedding and accumulating members, Faust offers a well-integrated live sound freshened up with current technologies. It doesn't hurt that the group maintains an open mind to the influences of successive generations of newcomers. Towards the end of the show, Vask steps out of the spotlight (which he never fully

embraced at any point in the concert) to attend to a laptop in his corner. A booming broadcast soon provides a jarring contrast to the natural percussion produced early in the evening. The lighting matches this change by suddenly fragmenting into a dappled light pulsing erratically through the Volksbühne theatre. Diermaier, Limpl and the rest of the group continue during out heavy chords and drumming as if nothing, not even the hint of a trivial club music track, could sour the sophistication of their sound. They allow the synthetic beats to enter into the musical mix, and yet they still succeed in holding on to the foundation. The noise eventually wanes down again to basic elements and then falls back on lighter organ sounds that drift away. When they line up and give goodbye from the stage, the group's wide smiles and relaxed stiffs suggest they are satisfied with the fearlessly experimental trajectory their music has followed. □

## ALVIN LUCIER NEW YORK CHELSEA ART MUSEUM USA

BY MARCUS BOWEN

Speaking before the Electronic Music Foundation sponsored retrospective of his work at the newly opened Chelsea Art Museum, sound art pioneer Alvin Lucier recalled a network made by Stravinsky, who termed compositions based on dactylic models but, so original as to appear totally beyond the source, as "monstrous originals." Lucier commented wryly that he set out to produce such monsters: Music For Solo Performer, first performed in 1965, indeed remains such a monster. First conceived after conversations with an Air Force physicist regarding brainwaves, it uses an electroencephalograph (EEG) set-up to register alpha-wave brain activity which is then converted to sounds via a group of speakers set up around the room, which act as resonating tubes for a variety of percussive sound sources (bass drums,

trangles, gongs and the like).

Now in his seventies, but speaking with the same gentle precision and intensity that can be heard on his electroacoustic tape masterpiece *I Am Setting in A Room*, Lucier said he found it amusingly easy to enter a mental state where he produced alpha waves. This took nothing away from the theatrical intimacy with which the composer seated himself alone in the centre of the room, put on the EEG electrodes, and "composed" himself, almost motionless, with one hand on a modulating device on a nearby table, the other resting on his leg, meditation style. Lucier commented that he was "bounced by the image of the immobile, if not paralyzed, human being who by merely changing states of visual attention, could activate a large configuration of communication equipment with what appears to be power from a spiritual realm."

The only real reference point for the performance for most people is the regular thump of the human heart beating—slow, aside from the offbeat, the human body is a

silent, or rather, very quiet, object. But, as Lucier observed, part of the charm of alpha waves is their irregularity. As the EEG equipment picked up Lucier's brainwaves, complex, irregular, naming, challenging percussive patterns passed through the room. Though the instrumental sounds did not obviously denote brainwaves, the visual set-up which cast them like shadows into the room made one recognize that a living process—thinking, in this case—had been, in Lucier's term, "spatialized."

Lucier insisted that it was this interest in spatialization, in how any sound is always a sound manifesting in a particular space, that was the unifying thread in his work. So, on *Disappearances*, a 1994 string quartet piece, the musicians' subtle deviations around a single sustained line created various overtones and beeping phenomena to appear and disappear, while on *Wave Songs*, Cage's master vocal interpreter Jon La Barbo sang precise pitches that penetrated the bare tones coming from two sine-wave oscillators.

"It's hard for me to get the acoustic phenomena I want to get—so I have to search the room," Lucier noted at one point. This was a good, literal description of the evening's other high point, a performance of his 1975 piece, *Bird And Person Dyming*, in which a binocular microphone system inserted in the room allowed reproduction of sound almost exactly as someone hears it. Lucier used this set up to carefully and precisely modulate feedback and other series of oscillations produced by an electric birdcall device positioned between the speakers and the microphones. Making very subtle movements of his head and slowly shifting his position in the room to catch and intervene in the intersection of different soundwaves, Lucier looked like a strange, Nietzschean omniscient seeking out the rarest beings, in full knowledge that beings come not from the left, nor from the right, but from their relative positions in a space. □

Spark Stage: Faust in Berlin





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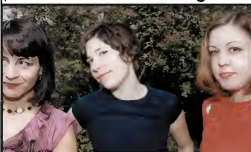
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## 12 BRIGHTON Old Market

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\*10th & 11th August only

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 School of Arts and Cultures,  
 University of Newcastle,  
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 NE1 7RU, or can be found at  
<http://www.ncl.ac.uk/postgraduate/apply/forms/>

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# Out There

This month's selected festivals, live events, clubs and broadcasts.

Send info to **The Wire**, 2nd Floor East, 88-94 Wentworth Street, London E1 7SA, UK

Fax +44 (0)20 7422 5011, listings@thewire.co.uk

Compiled by Phil England



Matthew Herbert at The Big Chill (left), William Parker at Free Music XXX



## UK festivals

### BIG CHILL

#### HEREFORDSHIRE

Lead back, lush outdoor festival with Jimi Bae and Band, Cinematic Orchestra performing a live soundtrack to the film *Man With A Movie Camera*. Jaga Jasta, Talvin Singh presenting an evening of Indian classical music, Matthew Herbert Big Band, A Guy Called Gerald, Coldcut's Matt Black, Mike Penland, Siza, Howie B, John Peel, Muzol, DJ Food's live tumble score to *Head*, Mr Scruff and many others. Herefordshire Eastern Castle Deer Park, August 1-3, £99 adults, £25 children, 020 7684 2020, www.bigchill.net

### LADYFEST BRISTOL

The multifaceted and participatory festival comes to Bristol. Musically, independence and DIY are the order of the day. Concerts by: Holly Golightly, The Applicants, The Gossip, AGE, Scout Niblett, Rokita, Rita Lynch, Alice & The Serial Numbers, Masha Qalia, Moor and more to be announced. There's a week-long programme of feminist films including the unofficial PJ Harvey tour documentary *Stones From The Road*. The festival also boasts "the biggest exhibition of female comic art this side of the Atlantic", as well as an exhibition by four artists from California and a weekend programme of spoken word. Workshops and seminars topics include bicycle repair, comic book making, crazy ladies in film, activism and debates about feminism.

gender and sexuality Bristol Thelma, Fleece & Fiske, Cube Metropolis and other venues, 14-17 August, weekend passes £40, day passes £10/£15, 0117 929 9008, www.ladyfestbristol.org

### 86

LONDON  
Bleep43 electronica weekend festival. Live sets from James Croyden, Orphan and Nick Wilson plus DJ sets from Warp's Misa Calk and Riq and 300's John Kennedy London Public Life, 16 August, 3pm-2am, 17 August 6pm-11pm, 020 7375 2426, www.bleep43.com, www.publife.org.uk

### ROUGH TRADE SHOP WEEKEND

LONDON  
Premiering to be the inaugural annual summer festival for London's favourite independent music shops, the weekend features an array of contrasting and distinctive performers. Line-up is as follows: Narbonne, the Flaxheads, Coldcut, Magdon, The Caracalbuilders, the Holcom Clones and Half Cousin (9 August), James Yorkston, The Webb Brothers, Adam, Aedan Smith, The Fence Collective, Willis and Ella Guru. DJs over the weekend include John Kennedy and Tony Morley London ICA theatre and bar, 9-10 August, 4pm-1am, £16/£15/£14 per day, 020 7930 3647, www.ica.org.uk

### SUMMER SUNDAY: CONCERT FOR A LANDMINE FREE WORLD

UK  
This fundraising weekend kicks off with a club night hosted by Mr Scruff's Keep It Unreal (8

August) and continues with Guxon Project, Akabane 3, Chumbawamba, Loose Control, Echoboy, British Sea Power, Kathryn Williams, London Electricity, Pink Grease and Chungling (9), and Emmylou Harris, Billy Bragg, Joan Baez, Duran Duran, Steve Earle, Chas & Dave, Nicky McCallum and others (10). Lancaster De Montfort Hall Gardens, weekend camping ticket £50, 0116 233 3111, www.demontforthall.co.uk

## International festivals

### AVANT MUSIC FESTIVAL

#### SPAIN

Mixed music festival in a medieval castle by the beach. Acts include Tortoise, Lamb, Aron Tobin, Nils Petter Molvær, Hood, Gabeiro, Esperanza and Alpha with more to be confirmed. The festival also includes a collaboration with the Interactive Music Museum of Málaga. Puerto de San Carlos, 1-3 August, 0034 902 888 902, www.avantmusic.com

### FREE MUSIC FESTIVAL XXX

#### BELGIUM

30th anniversary of this improvisation get-together with Peter Brötzmann, William Parker, Harold Drake, John Edwards, Fred Van Horn, Michel Doneda, Li Qian Ning, Magpie Noels, Konrad Bauer, Barre Phillips, Iwona Masaka, Michel Muscat, Wu Wu, Luk Mashalle and others. Antwerp Theater Zuidpoort, 7-9 August,

0032 3 281 5084/213 8660

### INTERNATIONALES JAZZFESTIVAL SAALFELDEN

#### AUSTRIA

Alpine jazz weekend with a sumptuous line-up. Highlights include James Chance & The Contortions, Matthew Shipp, Elliott Sharp & Sander Tokidoki, Mya Meland's live band featuring Brandon Ross, Supersilent, Dave Douglas Sextet, Brandon Ross, Supersilent, Dave Douglas Sextet, Dave Holland Big Band, Marc Ribot Septet and Marc Ribot Mystery Trio, Bobby Previtt solo, The Double Duo Ensemble with Moa Shams, Ravi Coltrane, Rashad Ali and Pharoah Aulick, Get Allen's Time Line, Steven Bernstein & The Sam Rivers Ten Despoza Blues, Martin Koller & Nils-Peter Molvær, Living Colour featuring Vernon Reid and Doug Wimbush, Scotch The Wolfgang Ringer project, Michael Carter Music Luss Solists and the Franz Hatzinger project. Saalfelden various venues, 29-31 August, 0043 6982 74963, www.jazzsaalfelden.at

### MOR AUDIO VISUAL ADVENTURES' IRELAND

01-months-on weekend festival set in a castle in the Irish countryside on a train ride from Dublin. Inaugural event which hopes to become an annual platform for Irish labels, club nights and artists. International acts confirmed include Luckhurst, Florie Baudin & His Vocalism Orchestra, Colleen, Wayne Shorter, Jobo De Prijs, Fela Kuti and Max Tundra. These will appear alongside hot air balloons, fireworks and up to 50 local acts including Decal, Nine Hynes,



## Out There

### TRASH CULTURE

**SPAIN**  
Continuing exhibit exploring trash culture in television, painting, and music. Fighting for attention with the fleshheads, serial killers and Lol Wot, the music section presents ten artists in ten rooms, including Daniel Johnston, The Shaggs, William Shatner, Hens, Luscious Jackson, and others. The Johnson section includes video, photographs and drawings from the Museum of Love's permanent collection that have never been shown in public. Barcelona OCCC, to 31 August, [www.oocb.org](http://www.oocb.org).

### LA MONTE YOUNG & MARIAN

**ZAZZLEA**  
**GERMANY**  
Rare opportunity to experience the work of the New York minimalist legends. Young's *The Magic Opening Chord* with Zazalea's *Light Works* (Sensory Discs 3-5pm) and DVD installation of Young's solo half hour performance of *The Well Tuned Piano* (Sensory 4-6pm). Rolling Kunst in Regenbogenstad, to the end of October, 0049 881 417719, [www.kunstregens.de](http://www.kunstregens.de)

## On stage

### DEREK BAILEY'S LIMESCALE

CD launch night for Derek Bailey's live piece *Joe Limescale* - featuring the impressive improviser alongside Sonic Measures on amplifier, bass, and a half hour performance of *The Well Tuned Piano* (Sensory 4-6pm). Rolling Kunst in Regenbogenstad, to the end of October, 0049 881 417719, [www.kunstregens.de](http://www.kunstregens.de)

### TERRY CALLIER

Traveling soul folk legend returns to London Jazz Cafe, 12-13 August, 17-15, 020 7916 8080

### CON-DO-M + FRIENDS

Harsh electronics evening with Con-Do-M, Mort,

Puffett, Chronomastress and Small & Quins. Birmingham Society Music, 28 August, 8-30pm, £1, 0121 686 6846

### DALEK

Essential contemporary HipHop trio from New Jersey. Newsworld City (4 August), Glasgow Barfly (5), Leeds Brudenell Social (6), Nottingham Rescue Rooms (7), Birmingham Medicine Bar (8), Cardiff Club for Bach (9), Easter Caverns (10), Bristol Thekla (11), Barry Phoenix Inn (13) and London The 141, [www.deadeye.co.uk](http://www.deadeye.co.uk)

### THE GOSSIP

Washington Post Grit to make the Atlantic crossing for Ladyfest Bristol, then tour: Bristol Pianos & Frink (17), Easter Caverns Club (20), Brighton TBA (22), London Spritz (23), Nottingham Rescue Rooms (25), Glasgow Barfly (28), [www.thegossip.com](http://www.thegossip.com)

### JAZZ JAZZIST

The Newsworld jazz band are back in town. Jazz Cafe, 4 August, £10, 020 7344 0044, [www.jazzcafe.co.uk](http://www.jazzcafe.co.uk)

### JAZZ JAMAICA ALL STARS

Bopper World Music evening featuring the jazz-kaggle All Stars plus Woodstock brass band Kongo Orkestra, future accordion music from Menno Puhjonen, Swedish fiddling and Sennegalese kora playing from Elvika & Solo and singer-songwriter Marcecos Costa from Guinea Bissau. London Royal Albert Hall, 2 August, 15-12:50, 020 7520 8212

### LONDON IMPROVISERS ORCHESTRA

Monthly conducted improvisational fun and games from this smart musicians' pool. London Red Rose Club, 3 August and every first Sunday of the month, 8pm, £5/£3, 020 7283 7265

### PAWNAW/BECK/HESION

One-off improvising trio for winds player JD Pawna from New York with local players Mick Beck on sax and bassoon and Paul Hession on chords. Leeds Adelphi (26 August), Sheffield Point (27)

### PATTI SMITH

New York punk goddess returns, more powerful than before. London Shepherd's Bush Empire, 11 August, £22.50, 020 7287 0932, [www.dor.co.uk](http://www.dor.co.uk)

### SLEATER-KINNEY

Brighton Old Market (12), London Mean Fiddler (13), [www.killostickets.com](http://www.killostickets.com)

### SQUAREPUSHER

Warp Records' thrash beats prodigy on tour. London HMS President on Victoria Embankment by Blackheath Road (6-7 August), Liverpool Stanley Theatre (8), Sheffield Laundmill (9), Edinburgh Liquid Rooms (11), Nottingham Rescue Rooms (12), [www.warprecords.com](http://www.warprecords.com)

### TRIO AAB

Ornette Coleman-inspired sax, guitar and drums trio. Edinburgh Henry's Jazz Celler, 26 July, 8pm, £8.50, 0131 467 5200

## Club spaces

### BOAT TING

An unmissable evening of improvised music and poetry featuring the Henry Bickert Quartet with John Edwards, Tony Marsh & Chris Boscoe, NEW comprising Steve Mohio, John Edwards & Alex Ward, Kasai Maeki featuring Nikko Nisco, Kewle, Jose Buja & Ramo plus poetry and songs from Mary Parker. London The Yeacht Club, 25 August and every last Monday of the month, 7pm, £5/£2.50, 020 8670 5094, [www.boat-ting.com](http://www.boat-ting.com)

### CUBE MICROPLEX

Music events at Bristol's alternative cinema space this month include Crescent and Far Cat guests (11 August), acoustic bright electronics from Knowledge Of Bags, plus live supports from Greenwharf, Wane Wendred and Bug Band Boxes (2), Tigebats! label co-owner Cat live plus jazzified HipHop from Kid Carpet and Freew Pupp (6), and the Bristol Ladyfest film programme (11-17). Bristol Cube, 0117 907

4190, [www.cubecinema.com](http://www.cubecinema.com)

### EVERYNOW

"An evening of free electronic silences and costly acoustic glitches" with acoust bending and bass clatter from Gase & Delets, guitar and objects played from Hens, saxophone and diurnal from Sanyo, electronics from Hypostatic, Mayami's beatbox and Malik's laptop. London Fensley 3 August, from 6-30pm, live, 07860 638951

### FLUORESCENT

Bi-monthly night of electric beats and live performance presented by the DOR label. Live laptop set from Futurism, abrasive analogue loops from Dopples020, plus electric DJ sets from Timothy Evans and Phil England and visuals from the DOR Cinema. London Public Life, 10pm, live, 020 7375 2425, [www.dor.co.uk/futurism.net](http://www.dor.co.uk/futurism.net)

### GLOBAL HEADPUNK

Eclectic funk-infused global beats mixing Bengali breakfast, African raw growls, French medieval, reggae and Rastafarian drum and bass from residents Nelson Dilation, Tim Whelan, Sanjeev Rupal and Sprout. London Hertel, 13 August and every second Wednesday of the month, £2.50/£2 or free before 10pm, 020 7613 4462

### HESTER STUPID

Multi-cultural improvisation and electronics with live bass players Andy Knight and Alad Rees, Emperor Ming on laptop and thesauri joining DJ's Laseille Laseille and Matt Skylab. London Smash, 24 August, 6-30-11pm, live, 020 7739 0092, [www.emeroh.com](http://www.emeroh.com)

### JUUU

Multi-cultural evenings combining breakbeats, roots music, MCs, poets and film with intentional live-ups: the latest instalments feature live music from Akkasi, special guests More Roberts, MC Buzz B and wadwatts. Brother Nini & Hjalta, trumpeter Kevin G Day and drummer Adam Lawrence, plus resident DJ's, films and images (25 July). Live set from

# UK Radio

## National

**BBC RADIO 1 9-10 PM**

**JOHN PEEL**

Tuesday Thursday 10pm midnight

Leftfield music across the board

**GILLES PETERSON**

Thursday midnight-2am

Post-Avant jazz

**FABIO & GROOVERIOR**

Saturday 1-3 am. Wavelength drum 'n' bass

**WESTWOOD RAP SHOW**

Friday 9-11pm/Saturday 9pm midnight

HipHop tunes

**REGGAE DANCEHALL NITE**

Sunday midnight-2am. Bass culture

**BBC RADIO 3 9-10 PM**

**LATE JUNCTION**

Monday-Thursday 10-15-midnight

New Music commentary

**JAZZ LEGENDS**

Friday 4-5pm. Archive recordings

**ANDY KERSHAW**

Friday 10-15-11-30pm World Music

**JAZZ ON 3**

Friday 11-30pm-1am

Modern jazz in session and concert

**WORLD ROUTES**

Saturday 1-2am

Jazz Dorian presents a travelling of global music

**JAZZ FILE**

Saturday 6-8-30pm

Documentary magazine

**HEAR AND NOW**

Saturday 10-15pm-1am New Music magazine

**MIXING IT**

Sunday 11pm-midnight

Hyper-electric mix of avant sounds

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The Wire Website. [www.thewire.co.uk](http://www.thewire.co.uk)

## Regional

**BBC LANCASHIRE**

95.5/103.9/104.5 FM, 855 MW

**ON THE WIRE**

Saturday 10pm-midnight: The Wire's cab doorman

Steve Barker mixes it up wildlife

**BBC MERSEYSIDE**

96.8 FM, 1485 MW

**PMS**

Saturday midnight-2am: Free-wheeling mix of recent sounds

**BBC SCOTLAND 92.4-94.7 FM**

**FROM BEBOP TO HIPHOP**

Wednesday 7-15-9.05pm, Sunday 10.05pm-

midnight: Jazz and its beats

**CABLE RADIO 89.8 FM**

(MILTON KEYNES)

**THE GARDEN OF EARTHLY DELIGHTS**

Friday 10pm-midnight: Eclectic avant mix

**JUICE 107.2 FM (BRIGHTON)**

**TOTALITY WIRED**

Sunday 11pm-1am: Leftfield new music

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Alvao, special guests Jerry Demmers and Di Ryan, Mbrs nags from Zimbabwe's Zimbabwean plus resident DJs, live musicians, films and images (29 August), London Africa, 10pm-3am, £5/£7, 020 7836 1973, www.alvao.com/jazz

## KLINKER

Three weekly improvised music & of the wall performance duo Annie Lowndes-Jones/Caroline Krawell and The Geneva Sals (5), Auster Smiley, W. Cole, Jay Evans and Emily Burnage (7), The Fajr with Vonnica & Paul Shearnsmith, Roland Safes's Selen By A Monkey and Wombland (9), Tongue, Frotage, Lits Tempora featuring pianist Markus Niewisch with Chris Gundry and Tony Wren (14), Mike Fraser, Simon Koton and Reynaldo (19), Tony Marsh (21), Skull Fack and The Garlist (26), The Eulipians present Isaac Cabaret plus film and sounds from HAWG (28), London Sussex, Thursdays and Thursdays (9pm, 020 8806 8216)

## LEKTORLAB LOVES KRAWALLA

German performer Krawalla and - we do but you not - her one-woman post-Rot Gimp puppet show with distinctive visuals created especially for this show by RGB Invaded, plus support from her group Egoistic, London, 10pm, 15 August, £5/£5, 020 7930 3647, www.ica.org.uk

## BAR

### MISO

Monthly night right for new electronics, spread over the two floors of Glasgow's 13th Note Cafe. 16-Beards Of Canada collaborator Chris plus DJs Gakam and Red West, Glasgow 13th Note Cafe, 2 August, 0141 563 1638, www.13thnote.co.uk, www.thepointart.com

## THE ORCHESTRA PIT

Re-orchestrated pit for experimental rock and adventurous new music features a solo set from Terry Edwards on saxophone and pre-recorded material; the Loam live featuring ex-The Home drummer Charles Hayward with Iyona Thomas on guitar and Ashleigh Marsh on keyboards and sax, and Mondo Way train guitar instruments like The Chaves playing material from their 12 year career, Plus DJs James Sedwicks, Irmelinda, DJ Pseudonym and geekville, London The Arts Cafe, 7 August, 7:30pm-12:30am, £5, 020 7247 5681, www.theorchestrapit.co.uk

## SPIRIT OF GRAVITY

Live experimental music evening featuring robot-melodies from Multiples, lush electronics from Delsen and edgy drum 'n' bass from Ladyscaper plus resident DJs, Brighton Freebairn, 26 August, 8:30pm, £3/£2, 01273 063914, www.spiritofgravity.com

## SPRAWL

The monthly club for diverse digital music uses live music, features three live acts performing from Sydney Australia - the analogic electronics duo Mink, guitar/electronics improviser Anthony Guerra and the multi-faceted quartet of Phoebe Jenks, Luca Dayne, Samuira Swaneau & Marcus Lendley plus resident DJs London The Loft, 6 August, 7:30pm-midnight, £4/£3, 020 7251 8787, www.usefuluse.com/sprawl

## TICK OUTSIDE THE BOX

Afternoon improvisation workshop open to performers exploring acoustic traditions in performance with Urban Myth and friends Brighton Comedy Club, 14 August, 3:30-9:30pm, fee, contact 01273 695104 in advance for membership info

## TRIBAL GATHERING - THE WAREHOUSE PARTY MANCHESTER

Acid House reunite with live performances from A Gay Called Gerald, LFO and The Rapture live along with DJ sets from Scratch Perverts, Derek Carter, Laurent Garnier, Jeff Mills, Photek featuring Do Or Die, Good-Armed, Gilles Peterson and others, Manchester secret warehouse location, Bank Holiday 23 August, 2pm-6am, £22, www.bisnighting.co.uk, www.tdnet.com

## UNKNOWN PLEASURES

Scottish electronic label Benbecula Records presents former Beats Of Canada collaborator Christ plus Greenback and Fogspout, Aberdeen, 23 August, 23 August, 8pm-2am, £8.50/£5.75, www.benbecula.com

## 88

Live event-electronics collective, London 46 Deptford Broadway, SE8, 21 August, 7:30pm-midnight, live, www.88.co.uk

## Incoming

### BIENNALE BERN SWITZERLAND

Large scale festival including Peter Brötzmann's Chicago Tentet, Janet Cardiff's 40 Part Metal installation, Zerbrotter with Lee Ranaldo performing work by Steve Reich, Philip Glass, Rinaldo, Jim O'Rourke and others, Janek Schaffer, musical solo, Vinko Globokar, plus works by Iannis Xenakis, György Ligeti, Arvo Pärt, Giacomo Scatti, Helmut Lachenmann and Edgar Varèse, Bern 4-14 September, www.biennale-bern.ch

## BOBBING ABOUT ON THE RIVER

Boat Trips' first annual festival in memory of Bob Cobbing. Featuring The Noise Eating Monsters, Harry Beddell, The Bohman Family, Steve Revealed/Monarchi Papasoularis, Bicycle Clip Sex, Lol Cozelli, They Came From The Sea, Simon Fell, the Guffy Motors, Nigel Burch and his Repeat Orchestra and many others (28 September, 12-1pm, noon-1pm), The False Face Society, the Village Necks, Gifford Road, Skip comprising Hugh Metcalfe & Vernon Weston, Lawrence Upton and Rob Denton (29, 7pm-midnight), London The Yacht Club, 28-29 September, 020 8670 5094, www.boat-tips.com

## THE CRAMPS

The Marsters of garage rock are back and on form, Nottingham Rock City (25 September) and London Astoria (26), members.show.co.uk/the-cramps

## DOMINO 10 UK

Tenth anniversary of the Domino Records label Chris (London, 4 October), Bonnie 'Prince' Billy plus supports (London: Cool Sharp House, 12, 14-15), The Rabels and Wavelengths (CA, 13), Four Tet, Mouse On Mars and Max Tundra (London: The End, 17) and more than www.dominorecord.co.uk

## LMC'S 12TH ANNUAL FESTIVAL

### UK-THE WORLD

London Musicians' Collective give AMM guitarists Keith Rowe and Yuzuru of the Japanese new music scene Osamu Yoshida carte blanche to create a one-day event which draws on the human and other resources of the LMC's creative pool. Expect performances at the Place Theatre, broadcasts and Webcasts from the LMC's

Resonance 104 FM radio station and random happenings across London. London The Place, 6-7 September, 020 7387 0161, www.resonancefm.com

## MIMEO

First-ever UK appearance from this electroacoustic improv collective convened by Keith Rowe. London September, 5 September, 7pm, www.mimeo.org/eng/kye

## REMIX - STRUCTURES AND IMPROVISATIONS

Electronic artist UN Carre has put together the programme for the 47th International Festival of Contemporary Music, which features the UK Carre Ensemble reworking Verdi's opera Otello, Otello Yoshida, Uri Caine/Dave Douglas, David Moss's Wild World, Di Olive's Bla Bla Bla video and cinema project, David Shida, The Amsterdam Sting Trio, Paolo Fresu/Charles Tawad, Magnus Lindberg, Sergio On A Can perform Carlos Nancho, Thurston Moore, Anne Gossfeld & others, Elliott Krasner's Caravan, Don Ryan's Music For Sex Machines, Steve Coleman & Five Elements, Sylvie Courvoisier/Mark Feldman and Erik Friedlander, Gary Lucas performs live to Der Golem, Richard Teitelbaum's 20 for intonate musicians and Jewish singers, Mezzogiorno Kriener Band, David Kriener & Kriener Waldner, Ursula Oppens plays Elliott Carter, Nancho and others, Ethel Guzman play the music of John Zorn, Henry Threadgill Ensemble, Valerio, Ben Serinik, Durga Bates-Hillman, Chris with the Smith Quartet, Michael Richard Abrams/Greg Lewis/Roscoe Mitchell, Hans Koller's Hardcore Chamber Music, Fred Roth, Pamela Z, Bushi Morris New York Sycopater (21), Venice, 12-21 September, 0039 041 2424, biennale.italia.it/en/music/presentation/

**DAVID SYLVIAN**  
The boy with the golden voice returns in London following the release of his new album album London Festival Hall, 25 September, £27.50

**Out There: Roads for inclusion in the September issue should reach us by Friday 1 August**

## Scout Niblett

Out There and Scout Niblett  
The Measure a dual genre of music  
- The Guardian

a voice like a frosty morning  
- The Quietus

## Live

52 Aug The Buffalo Bar  
New album 1 AM live 5pm  
on Sunday Records 12pm  
5pm 10pm Records 12pm

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**Roots include**  
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**Brief History**  
While running No Future, a production  
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and it came when Super\_Collider needed a  
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**Other activities**  
We run the show and ponderous but funny  
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years, and host a surreal and unusual music  
board at our warehouse, sometimes choose  
help together with discussions about crazy  
music of all kinds. Cristian Vila all over the  
world, as well as playing live sets with  
Super\_Collider and others, and produces his  
own music plus groups such as Chicks On  
Furniture, Emma DJs once every two years, body

**Future plans**  
Super\_Collider's Blackstones On The Blue EP  
including Wagon Chant remix and live band

version) Las Perlas Del Inferno's. Some Las  
Perlas EP - this third guy one boy band are  
going to tear up the world with their sexy,  
surfy new garage sound. Mesotronics' Butterfly  
EP including unreleased tracks and St Begg  
remix and Buttery Video. Mesotronics 2.0, Big  
C What's the SP? EP featuring Cristian Vogel,  
Dave Tarride, Max Turner, St Begg and Like A  
Thru. \$40 Million Beatrix's \$40 Million Beatrix  
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Blake combining electronics and country, the  
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**Choice cuts**  
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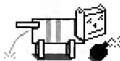
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What's new? well, some have been selling on aural list of the new superior music single as subject (Dendurium b/w edgewood berry), just the sort of jazz-funk tinged bedroom glomerobionic attack needed to kick off anyone's summer, quite fond of today's transatlantic "vibrational movements of metal plates / floating feedback oscillators" is no abuse, especially closer to twilight, moving to the recent post-rockers' catalogue... oh, the new album (Dendurium) which has proven quite bilabial during that last lunch-hour stretch, and who can refuse the stylized post-dubstep sensibilities of the various releases on that platform? even skip ahead! in fact the goodnight zip set has to be the single most over-the-top object production-value-wise some have seen in quite some time, and the archive of funk-funk's garage recordings is really a godsend, however... what else... of course, explore the debut 11" on two records "reissues a non-like simplicity and locally sourced sounds and objects, working the various stratter methods to sublime effect", decide have said it better myself, plus the "housebats" and "housebats" series of light sets on top 2 discs... we've all been hearing a great deal about when art punk from those, the first little comic 11" on the ground is certainly amusing, we're eagerly awaiting volume 2, no shortage of interesting titles really...

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# Epiphanies

**Stumbling into a Spiral Tribe party in the suburban night, Jerome Maunsell had his head rearranged by Techno's visions of globalised collectivity**



The ravers are revvving. Police break up a London Spiral Tribe party, 1992

In the spring of 1993 I was a whey-faced teenager in the throes of an unhealthy passion for the nebulous noise soups of My Bloody Valentine, Sonic Youth and Dinosaur Jr. Something sharper came my way through a tiny ad in the pages of the music papers. There were two phone numbers, a date and a curt announcement that Spiral Tribe were hosting a final party in London before leaving for Europe. It couldn't have been more different from the usual catalogue of indie gigs at the Town And Country Club or ULU that made my staple musical diet, and I was interested. At the time, the rave collective had a tangle of notoriety about them, mainly for their part in the week-long Castlemead free party the year before, and for a much smaller event at London's Canary Wharf. Their PA equipment had been impounded and they were facing trial, said the stories. If it were true, this last gasp in the capital seemed foolhardy to say the least. I had to go.

It was a decision I regretted later on, wandering around suburban nowhere lands at four in the morning, drenched in rain and utterly lost, with a friend, a pounding headache, a ragtag group of equally lost Irish ravers and £1 in my pocket. Finding these things was all meant to be part of the fun, but this was getting ridiculous. Waiting for the venue to be revealed, we'd spent the early part of the night hanging around payphones before taking the last tube to Finsbury Park (it was initially supposed to happen somewhere in North London, and we didn't have a car). After a desolate hour or two in a chip shop, we discovered that it was going to be in Uxbridge. Uxbridge? Thinking it was all that far, we took a cab. I chronically misjudged the monotone length of the M40, and the fare gobbled up all our money. When we finally got there, for all the cars and people milling around, none had a clue where the party was. Three hours later, we had even less of an idea.

A passing minicab drove eventually out us straight, and we found the site, a large warehouse down by the Grand Union Canal. Three vast rooms with stumped '23' logos and camouflage netting on the walls were filled with several thousand people dancing to what

sounded to me like the end of the world. At first I simply couldn't believe what I was hearing – what I later guessed were mainly imported records from the US and Germany pitched up to +8 on the turntables, augmented with live Acid squiggles and drops from a barrage of Roland TB-303s. It made no sense, but after a few hours' indoctrination, the noise began to take shape. By 7am it was light, and you could see the dawn pouring through the zigzagged glass roof of the building. A troupe of shaven-headed boiler-suited men took down the lights, while an ice cream van parked in the middle room sold tea and coffee. And the music spun off into fresh directions: it showed no sign whatsoever of letting up.

We left soon after, unlike some of the other people there, who apparently stayed three more days. But even the quick glimpse I did have was enough. Sitting at the tube station at the end of the Metropolitan Line that Easter morning with my ears ringing, I knew I had heard something special. Over the following years, I checked out Spiral Tribe's sporadic releases (which were, in truth, a chaotic mess), but also began to delve back and forth into this new world of sound. I soon found the trail leading back to the beginnings of Chicago Acid House and labels like DJ International, Trax and the Dutch-run Quake Beats. Then there were all the contemporary producers in Chicago, too numerous to mention. Over in Detroit was an even more fascinating wealth of output. I duly learnt to revere the holy trinity of Juan Atkins, Kevin Saunderson and Derrick May. But it was the so-called wave of 'second generation' producers that really caught my attention.

Even now, Jeff Mills's 'Waveform Transmission Vol 1', the first exposure I had to his music, seems awesomely original. His sometime partner Robert Hood, on milestone releases such as 'Minimal Nation', was often just as rigorous and revolutionary. Hood never really got the attention he deserved, as the limelight was hogged by other enigmatic figures: Carl Craig, Underground Resistance or Richie Hawtin, who was on something of a roll at the time, producing

a string of emaciated, spindly albums as Plastikman through the 90s, which went on to swell the minds of a much wider audience. It wasn't such a long way from here to discover some of the more home-friendly eccentric electronics that were happening in parallel in Britain – the wayward genius of Richard D James's infinitely mutable aliases, the louche rhythmic craftsmanship of Luke Vibert, the ever-evolving melancholy melodies of Autocue. There was so much fertile ground to explore.

Later on that year, reports of Spiral Tribe's progress in Europe filtered back to the UK. They popped up in increasingly unlikely places: under the Eiffel Tower, where the gendarmes were said to have wisecracked with open arms; in the south of France; in Prague. I never came up with them again. I was lucky to have seen them at all, before their vague utopian policies dissolved into pure chaos, and dance music was driven back into urban clubs by the Criminal Justice Bill in 1994. An initially subversive culture synthesising a potent home brew of DIY punk ideals and New Age traveller practices – with a psychedelic nod to Tom Wolfe's account of Ken Kesey and the Merry Pranksters, The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test, thrown in for good measure – was inevitably watered down and successfully co-opted by corporate interests as the decade wore on. With the sea change in the surrounding culture, the music suffered too, and lost some of its spirit and resonance.

Or perhaps that's just the way it felt to me. Instrumental music, by its very nature, can mean whatever you want it to, and is more vulnerable to shifts in context than verbal forms. Spiral Tribe won their fair share of ridicule and spite with their insistent courting of the media, and were especially fond of describing their party-hosting antics in torrents of anti-capitalist, eco-friendly rhetoric. They were even fond of the occasional reference to Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring* as a musical benchmark. In retrospect, they seem both prescient and mildly ridiculous – but for a few years in Britain they gave Techno music a voice and a home that suited it down to the ground. □

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